



**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA**

FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES

MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

## **REPATRIATION TO SIERRA LEONE**

*Case Study:* The Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA)

**Master's Thesis**

**Author: Sheku Kamara**

**VAASA 2009**

## TABLE OF CONTENT

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>                                 | <b>7</b>  |
| 1.1      | Background .....  | 7         |
| 1.2      | Research Objective and Questions .....                    | 8         |
| 1.3      | Research gap .....  | 9         |
| 1.4      | Definitions .....   | 10        |
| 1.5      | Limitations.....  | 11        |
| 1.6      | Structure of the study .....                              | 11        |
| <b>2</b> | <b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>                            | <b>12</b> |
| 2.1      | Why Organizations Send Out Expatriates.....               | 14        |
| 2.2      | Why Expatriates Accept International Assignments .....    | 14        |
| 2.3      | REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT .....                             | 15        |
| 2.3.1    | <i>The U-shaped curve and W-shaped curve models .....</i> | <i>15</i> |
| 2.3.2    | <i>Culture shock and reverse culture shock .....</i>      | <i>18</i> |
| 2.3.3    | <i>Reduction of uncertainty .....</i>                     | <i>20</i> |
| 2.4      | FACETS OF REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT.....                    | 22        |
| 2.5      | FACTORS IMPACTING REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT.....            | 25        |
| 2.5.1    | Pre-return adjustment .....                               | 25        |
| 2.6      | Post-return adjustment .....                              | 27        |
| 2.6.1    | <i>Individual variables.....</i>                          | <i>27</i> |
| 2.6.2    | <i>Job variables .....</i>                                | <i>28</i> |
| 2.6.3    | <i>Organizational variables.....</i>                      | <i>30</i> |
| 2.6.4    | <i>Non-work variables.....</i>                            | <i>33</i> |
| 2.7      | COPING STRATEGIES DURING TRANSITION .....                 | 35        |
| 2.8      | THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATION IN REPATRIATION .....            | 37        |
| 2.8.1    | <i>The essence of effective repatriation.....</i>         | <i>37</i> |
| 2.9      | EARLIER STUDIES ON REPATRIATION .....                     | 43        |
| 2.10     | SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW.....                     | 45        |
| <b>3</b> | <b>RESEARCH METHOD.....</b>                               | <b>46</b> |
| 3.1.1    | <i>Qualitative Method.....</i>                            | <i>46</i> |
| 3.1.2    | <i>Case Study .....</i>                                   | <i>48</i> |
| 3.1.3    | <i>Choice of Case Organization.....</i>                   | <i>49</i> |
| 3.2      | Participants introduction and description.....            | 51        |
| 3.3      | Collection of data .....                                  | 53        |
| 3.3.1    | <i>Data Analysis.....</i>                                 | <i>56</i> |
| 3.3.2    | <i>Validity and Reliability .....</i>                     | <i>57</i> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>EMPIRICAL FINDINGS .....</b>                           | <b>60</b> |
| 4.1      | Pre-Return Repatriation Adjustment .....                  | 61        |
| 4.1.1    | <i>Communication with the home organization .....</i>     | <i>61</i> |
| 4.1.2    | <i>Mentor .....</i>                                       | <i>64</i> |
| 4.1.3    | <i>Home country visits .....</i>                          | <i>65</i> |
| 4.1.4    | <i>Pre-return training .....</i>                          | <i>66</i> |
| 4.2      | Work adjustment.....                                      | 67        |
| 4.2.1    | <i>Post-Return Adjustment.....</i>                        | <i>67</i> |
| 4.2.2    | <i>Utilization of job skills.....</i>                     | <i>68</i> |
| 4.2.3    | <i>Professional Status loss.....</i>                      | <i>69</i> |
| 4.2.4    | <i>Co-workers and the home organization .....</i>         | <i>70</i> |
| 4.3      | Non-work Adjustment.....                                  | 72        |
| 4.3.1    | <i>Financial adjustment.....</i>                          | <i>73</i> |
| 4.3.2    | <i>Family adjustment.....</i>                             | <i>74</i> |

|            |   |           |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 4.3.3      | <i>Adjustment with friends</i> .....  | 76        |
| 4.3.4      | <i>Adjustment with extended family members</i> .....                            | 78        |
| 4.3.5      | <i>Adjustment to culture and experience of reverse culture shock</i> .....      | 79        |
| 4.4        | Psychological Adjustment .....  | 83        |
| 4.4.1      | <i>Choice</i> .....   | 84        |
| 4.4.2      | <i>Opportunities</i> .....  | 85        |
| 4.4.3      | <i>Expectations</i> .....   | 86        |
| 4.4.4      | <i>Strategies</i> .....   | 88        |
| <b>4.5</b> | <b>ROLE OF ORGANIZATION IN REPATRIATION</b> .....                               | <b>91</b> |
| 4.5.1      | <i>Pre-return assistance</i> .....  | 91        |
| 4.5.2      | <i>Post-return assistance</i> .....   | 93        |
| <b>5</b>   | <b>CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS</b> .....                                       | <b>96</b> |
| 5.1        | Conclusions .....   | 96        |
| 5.1.1      | <i>What was SLMFA staff experience with repatriation?</i> .....                 | 96        |
| 5.1.2      | <i>What strategies did SLMFA staff adopted to cope with repatriation?</i> ..... | 98        |
| 5.1.3      | <i>What assistance do SLMFA offer its staff for repatriation?</i> .....         | 100       |
| 5.2        | Implications for Management.....  | 102       |
| 5.3        | Suggestions for future research .....   | 103       |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1: Expatriate International Career Cycle (Alder, 1991:226).....                              | 13 |
| Figure 2: The repatriation process (Dowling et al. 1994).....                                       | 14 |
| Figure 3: Culture shock cycle (Adler, 1991:227).....  | 17 |
| Figure 4: Re-entry Adjustment curve (Adler, 1991:234).....  | 18 |
| Figure 5: Basic Framework of Repatriation Adjustment (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992:230)..... | 25 |
| Figure 6: Re-entry coping modes (Adler, 1981).....  | 37 |

## **ABSTRACT**

Going abroad for a number of years to live and work in different countries with different cultures can be a major challenge for most people. To manage these challenges and lower the burdens and difficulties associated with repatriation adjustment at home, human resources managers need to be proactive and be responsive to the re-adjustment problems that affect the lives of repatriates who have return back to their home country. Organizations and companies do not only underestimate the colossal burden to repatriation adjustment, but they also fail to acknowledge the difficulties that repatriates face when they have return back to their home country after working and completing international assignment abroad. Research shows that only a fraction of companies have invested substantially in managing and creating an effective repatriation process even though the repatriation process is considered to be more challenging than expatriation.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the repatriation adjustment of Sierra Leonean Embassies and Consulate's staff that has return back to Sierra Leone after working in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the US for (SLMFA) the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This study will investigate the experience the repatriates face in Sierra Leone, the strategies that were adopted by the repatriates to cope during the transition in Sierra Leone, and also the kind of assistance the repatriates receive from SLMFA during the adjustment phase in Sierra Leone.

The challenges faced by repatriates who returned back to SLMFA in Sierra Leone include: lack of current credentials or education, inability to re-establish the network that the repatriates were once part of at SLMFA before the overseas assignment, strong competition from younger and very ambitious employees some of whom have been employed by SLMFA in Sierra Leone while the repatriates were stationed abroad, changes in SLMFA's management, experience of culture shock and reverse culture shock, changes in lifestyle due to economic hardship, and struggling to adjust to the hot summer seasons in Sierra Leone.

Most of the returning staff for this study did not have positive experience with repatriation. The study found that the repatriates were delighted when they were leaving for the overseas assignment, and majority feel disappointed about their final return to Sierra Leone. The study reveal differences in the way cultural changes impact the

repatriates after their return. Repatriates who served in the West seem to be agitated about the cultural transformation that has taken place in Sierra Leone after their return. Repatriates who served in Africa and Asia also experience some form of cultural transformation after their return, but were not so concerned like their counterpart who have served in the West. The study found various forms of coping methods including few peculiar ones that the repatriates adopted during adjustment. The study reveals most of the coping strategies occur while the repatriates were out from their working place, and only few coping strategies were mentioned in relation to their working place. In relation to repatriation assistance, the study shows only few repatriates receive post-return assistance after the overseas assignment. The study reveals that the employees receive more support for expatriation than repatriation.

This study will begin by reviewing the relevant literatures in this field of study. Further, other core issues related to repatriation will be presented. The approach used in this study is qualitative single-case approach which was carried out through semi-structured interviews of nine repatriates who are currently working for SLMFA in Sierra Leone. The general finding in this current study reveals that repatriation is a colossal burden for all the returnees who took part in this study despite the gain made by only a few of the repatriates. It also reveals that repatriation adjustment is as demanding if not difficult than the original expatriation adjustment that was experienced by the repatriates when they first step their feet on a foreign soil abroad. The study found that most of the interviewees did not have meaningful experience to share about repatriation, and it seems only a few of the staff were satisfied with the job that SLMFA had offered them after the return.

**Keywords:** expatriate, repatriate, repatriation, adjustment, cultural shock, reverse culture shock

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the following people who have assisted, supported, and gave me advice since the inception of my thesis. I would like to say thanks to my thesis supervisor, Professor Vesa Suutari whose suggestions and advise have provided me with insight to undertake and complete this thesis. Special thanks to Mr. Alhaji M.S. Kargbo, a close family member who helped established contact between me and the former ambassadors in Sierra Leone. I wish to thank the two former ambassadors, Mr. Badara S. Basiru Dumbuya and Mrs. Marian J. Tanner Kamara for providing me the various contact information that made it possible for me to reach my prospective target group for this study.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Ms. Remoe B. Doherty, the first repatriate that I contacted in Sierra Leone for my study, but decline to partake in my research because of the new assignment that SLMFA has offered her to serve in Ghana. It was Ms. Doherty who helped expand my pool of potential candidate for this research, and I will always be grateful to her for the kind support and assistance that she gave to me at the early stage of my research work on SLMFA repatriation. Finally, I would like to extend my big thanks to each of the participants for taking their time to give me insight about their experience with repatriation. I truly cherished the education that you have provided me in relation to the way repatriation has impact your lives. Big thanks to you all for your kind support and assistance.

# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Background**

To achieve competitive advantage in an increasingly global economy, organisations from both the private and public sector are sending out countless number of expatriates to take up mission that may involved the evolution of concrete global relationship in business, politics, economic, social or cross-cultural activities. As organisations become globalised, there is an increasing challenge to use expatriates on international assignments to complete strategically critical tasks (Gregersen & Black, 1996). Because of these challenges it is therefore essential to highlight the International Human Resources Management problems from the perspective of the expatriation and the repatriation processes. Several studies have been carried out on issues related to expatriates' adjustment to foreign assignment and foreign cultures while less studies have been undertaken to examine the dilemmas to repatriation. The last step in the expatriation cycle, repatriation to the home country and organization, has received less attention (Bonache et al., 2001; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997).

Returning back to home country after living abroad for years can be very difficult and even more difficult than adjusting to a foreign culture (Adler 1981, 341). While companies may to some extent have realised the importance of preparing their expatriates for international assignments, in general the importance of the repatriation process has not been acknowledged (Harvey, 1989, 135). Although the need for support has been proven through research, repatriation and the problems connected with it are still not taken sufficiently into consideration by international companies (Adler et al. 1993, 86). This current repatriation study demonstrate that problems experienced by returnees two decade ago could still be experience today by repatriates who have just return to their home country. According to (Stahl and Cerdin, 2004) repatriation is the area of highest dissatisfaction, and between a quarter and a third of repatriates leave their firm within two years of returning (Suutari and Brewster, 2003). With the growing incidence of foreign postings, the area of repatriation adjustment strategies need to be addressed and studied in greater detail (Hammer, Hart, & Rogan, 1998).

When expatriates return to their home country they often believe that transferring into a known environment should not be such a big problem, in fact many believe that there should be no problem at all; after all, it is the expatriates' home country. The returning expatriates are expected to pick up the threads of their old life and settle in quickly without major difficulties. It is not only the organizations that frequently fail to recognize the potential shock of reentry; the expatriates themselves expect an easy return. They do not consider the possibility that they themselves have changed as a result of a foreign experience, and that there might have been changes within the home organization and the home country (Harzing et al, 1995).

Coming back home means readjusting to several aspects of life, such as adjusting to the work environment, adjusting to the general environment where the repatriate find him/herself, and adjusting to the country's culture again after long stay abroad. Longer-term, between a quarter and a third of repatriates leave their firm within two years of returning (Suutari and Brewster, 2003), and research evidence also shows that 10-25% of expatriates leave their company within one year of repatriation (Black, 1992; Solomon, 1995). Also, surveys shows that repatriation is the area of highest dissatisfaction of expatriates with respect to organizational policies (Stahl and Cerdin, 2004).

The quality of the repatriation journey is impacted by a variety of factors including the individual's expectations and their receptivity to working abroad. Previous research has highlighted the central role of the expatriate's expectations in the repatriation process (Black, 1992). International assignees optimistically hope for a holistic process which gives them an early indication of their next position and an adequate prospect of further career advancement. They look for opportunities to re-establish old contacts in the corporate centre (in the months before return), hope to be mentored in the changed realities at the head office, expect to be de-briefed and find honesty important. Most expatriates expect the return to enhance their career prospects and their return to be exciting and / or challenging (Suutari and Brewster, 2003; Tung, 1998).

## 1.2 Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this study is to examine the repatriation adjustment of repatriates who have returned back to Sierra Leone to work for (SLMFA) the Sierra Leone Ministry of



Foreign Affairs after working abroad for over six years. This study will investigate and attempt to answer the following questions: (1) What was SLMFA staff experiences with repatriation?, (2) What strategies did SLMFA staff adopt to cope with repatriation?, and (3) What assistance do SLMFA offer its staffs for repatriation?. By focusing on the repatriates experience, strategies used to cope with repatriation and the way in which the repatriates prepared themselves for repatriation the author of this thesis will be able to: (a) identify some of the gaps in the literatures that chronicled repatriation, (b) comprehend the implications associated with repatriation and the way it impacts the lives of the repatriates themselves, (c) unearth or draw attention to key issues that may help ease the transition of repatriation adjustment in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, this study will elaborate briefly the reasons why SLMFA sends out its employees/expatriates, and the reasons behind the employees/expatriates acceptance of the international assignment.

As far as the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs is concerned - this is the first study that has been undertaken to examine the repatriation adjustment process of SLMFA employees/repatriates who have returned back to Sierra Leone to continue their work after a long service abroad. Very seldomly has studies been undertaken on repatriation at the public sector organizations whose repatriated employees usually face similar repatriation problems as those in the private sector organizations. The knowledge generated from this research will benefit employees of the Sierra Leone ministry of Foreign Affairs and other organizations that deal with repatriation issues from time to time.

### 1.3 Research gap

Research on repatriation adjustment has received too little attention in the study of human resources management. The last step in the expatriation cycle, repatriation to the home country and organization, has received less attention (Bonache et al., 2001; Foster, 1994; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Riusala and Suutari, 2000; Tung, 1998). This current thesis will examine issues related to repatriation in Sierra Leone. While there exists information in the U.S., the EU, and few in the Asian countries regarding repatriation, there is no trace of data on issues related to repatriation in Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone statistics and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs has never established a source of information for repatriates who have returned back to Sierra Leone after international assignment. Despite this lack of repatriation data, Sierra Leoneans are

increasingly participating in cross-border assignments to work for some of the public and non-public sector organizations that exist in Sierra Leone. The vast majority of research on international workers has focused on the U.S., and empirical investigations have predominantly samples repatriated American executives and managers (see for instance Black, 1991, 1992; 1995; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987; Gregersen, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Stroh et al., 1998), there have been a small number of studies of Finnish (see for instance Suutari & Välimaa, 2002; Riusala & Suutari, 2000; Peltonen, 1997; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997) and Japanese repatriates (see for instance Black, 1994; Gregersen & Black, 1996), and one study sampling repatriates from 26 different countries (Feldman et al., 1993). Therefore, the author of this thesis believes a qualitative research will offer some contribution to the literature regarding the process of repatriation adjustment in Sierra Leone. The current study focuses on the repatriation adjustment of Sierra Leonean embassies and consulate's staff who has return back to Sierra Leone after working in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the US for (SLMFA) the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs for over six years.

This study will: enlighten readers about repatriation at the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs, help other returning repatriates at SLMFA to better grasp the real life situation that awaits repatriates when they return back to Sierra Leone. This study will educate and help prepared other expatriates who have been sent abroad by the public and non-public sector organizations that operate in Sierra Leone. This study will demonstrate to the outside world that Sierra Leone also has its own mammoth repatriation problem that needs to be told and not confined.

#### 1.4 Definitions

Repatriation in this study context refers to the process of returning back to the home country after the completion of a lengthy international assignment abroad. Repatriation is the last step in the expatriation cycle (Paik et al., 2002) and it involves readjustment and re-entry of international managers and their families back to their home country (Linehan & Scullion, 2002). Expatriation and repatriation are not two separated processes, rather the former is a beginning and the latter the closure of the same process (Lazarova & Caligiuri, 2001). According to Adler (1991, 232:233) repatriate is person who is returning to the home country after completing a foreign assignment.

## 1.5 Limitations

This study will investigate the repatriation experiences of repatriates at the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) who have return to Sierra Leone for 1½ year period. Such period is the time during which most of the repatriation readjustments is taking place in Sierra Leone. Repatriates who have returned to Sierra Leone over 1½ year has already felt the brunt of repatriation, and are now in the process of adapting and adjusting to life in Sierra Leone. Moreover, such repatriates usually act as advisers to other newly arrived repatriates which means that they already know so much the true meaning of repatriation. The reason for choosing repatriates who have been in Sierra Leone for one and a half year is because they are still witnessing with their own eyes the superficial part of a home country they have just returned to after years of international service abroad. They have not yet fully discover what lies beneath their home country, and some of them are still behaving like strangers who accidentally find themselves in a strange world.

The research approach to this current study is a qualitative single-case study which is done through a semi-structured interview method. This study is limited to SLMFA's Embassies and Consulates staff who has return back to Sierra Leone after an International assignment.

## 1.6 Structure of the study

*Chapter two* of this study will present the literature review in terms of the adjustments and the cultural shock perspectives. Further, this chapter will review the core areas of repatriation adjustment and the factors that influence the repatriation adjustment. Furthermore, the literature review will describe the coping strategies that could be used by the repatriates during the transition period, and will also discuss the role that organization plays in repatriation. *Chapter three* will elaborate on the research methodology and approach to the data collection and data analysis. *Chapter four* will present the results in this study. *Chapter five* will present the conclusions including the managerial implications and ideas for future research.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Repatriation involves the activity of bringing the employee's/expatriates back to the home country organization that sends the expatriates abroad. It is the last stage in the expatriate's career cycle as illustrated in Figure 1.

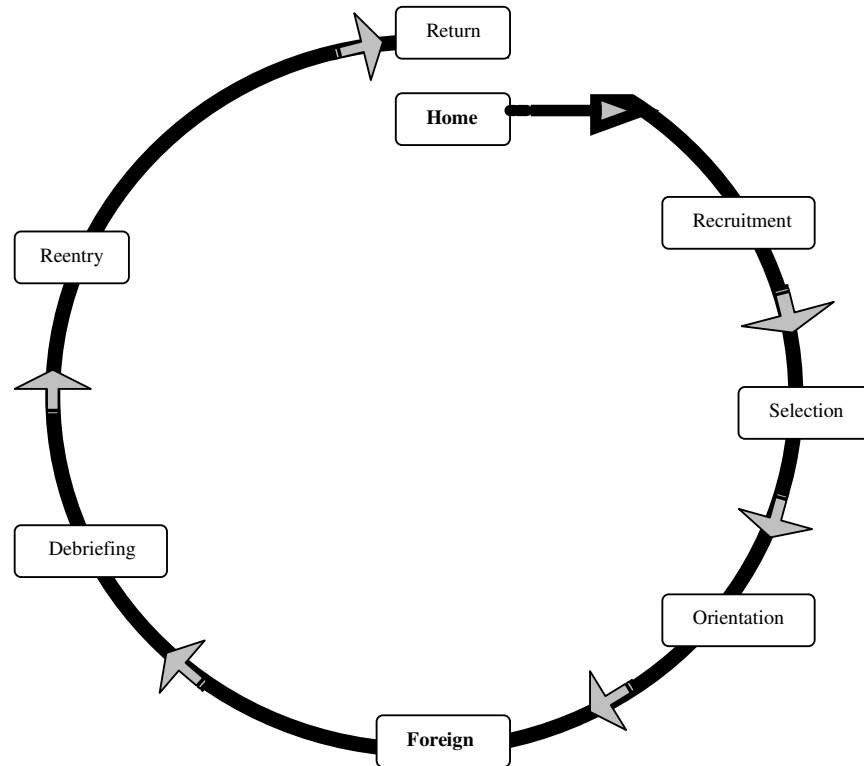


Figure 1: Expatriate International Career Cycle (Adler 1991:226)

Figure 1 illustrates the expatriate international cycle. It is easy to understand and can be a starting point to know what expatriation is about. According to Adler (1991) International employees go through a predictable series of stages in transferring from a domestic to an international assignment and back home again.

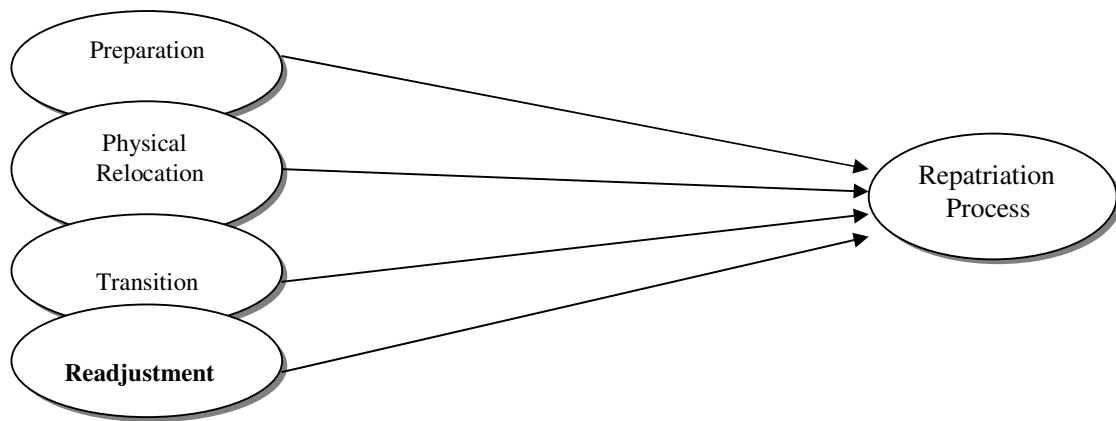


Figure 2: The repatriation process (Dowling et al. 1994)

Figure 2 describe the repatriation process. It present Dowling et al. (1994, 82-83) repatriation model which describes the repatriation process in four phases: (1) preparation, (2) physical relocation, (3) transition, and (4) the readjustment phase. The *preparation* phase involves the repatriate's plan which has to do with information gathering about the new job or position at the home country, information about new or former residence at home, settling bills with the bank and terminating contract with the nursery or school that the children may have attended in the foreign country. The preparation phase usually carries lots of emotion and pain especially for the children who may have adapted very well to the local culture, lifestyle, speak the native language very well, and leaving friends behind in the foreign country.

The *physical relocation* phase is about the personal effects which involve repatriates' farewell to colleagues and new friends that he/she or they may have made when working and staying in the foreign country, the movement and transfer from the foreign location to the home country by repatriate and family. The *transition* phase involves all the necessary arrangement for returning back to the home country, and this may include welcoming the repatriate or 'repatriate and family' back to the home country, assisting and giving direction to the temporary/permanent house and handover keys, showing direction to the children's school and give other vital information that may be needed while settling down gradually. The *readjustment* phase which is the most difficult and

most confusing phase involves coping with reverse cultural shock at home starting from the new environment and community to the new or old place of work.

This chapter may first attempt to explain in brief the reasons why organization sends out expatriates including the reasons for expatriates to accept international assignment. Further, this chapter will elaborate on the literature review that examines the repatriation adjustment in a more comprehensible way through Adler's (1991, 234-227) U-shaped curve and W-shaped curve models which describe and explain the occurrence of repatriates' adjustment in terms of culture shock, reverse culture shock and reduction of uncertainty. Second, the factors that affect and influence the repatriate's adjustment will be discussed. Third, the core issues related to repatriation problems during adjustment will be presented. Finally, the coping and transition strategies adopted by the repatriates will be examined including the roles of organization in regards to the repatriation process.

## 2.1 Why Organizations Send Out Expatriates

According to Baruch et al, (2002) there are three basic guidelines for using expatriates. The first one is, specific *business needs (knowledge transfer)*, i.e. sending people with specific skills or experience, which done in cases where the destination operation lack these specific skills. The second reason is, *career development*, which means giving promising managers the opportunity to go abroad in order to gain experience in management autonomy and selfsufficiency. The third reason is, *control over operations abroad*, which means keeping the subsidiary in line with the home organizational direction. Normally this would be done by senior managers. The international experience and knowledge that expatriate's develops during the international assignment is considered to be vital for the organization's success and development. Contradictory to this is that many companies do not make use of the acquired knowledge (Paik et al, 2002).

## 2.2 Why Expatriates Accept International Assignments

According to Paik et al (2002), the primary motive for expatriates accepting an international assignment has to do with their own personal growth and international

experiences. It is a common belief that an international assignment will enhance one's future career. Another motive is higher compensation and cross-culture adventure. Usually higher compensation is given to the employee while on the international assignment. These motives usually are the main reasons for going abroad (Paik et al, 2002). For the individual a successful repatriation can mean positive career advancement and development (Bonache et al, 2001), or a variation for a certain career direction (Scullion & Brewster, 2001), and an international assignment is also viewed by many companies as a strong tool for promoting the individual (Tung, 1988).

Another positive benefit that stems from this is that the repatriate is more motivated to perform efficiently and thereby increases the effectiveness of the organization (Harvey, 1989). Influencing and enhancing the commitment of repatriate to the organization with effective repatriation policies is a critical benefit that provides higher possibility to retain a strong pool of employees with valuable international experiences (Gregersen, 1991). A satisfied career development for the repatriate therefore also affects the organization's development in a positive way (Hurn, 1999).

## **2.3 REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT**

### **2.3.1 The U-shaped curve and W-shaped curve models**

Repatriation is the least carefully considered phase of global assignments, both in research and in organizational practices. Findings indicate that repatriation adjustment is often more difficult than the stage of cross-cultural transition; and a majority of repatriated employees are dissatisfied with the repatriation process (Adler, 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1998, 1999b). Repatriation adjustment research has been neglected to some extent for a simple reason: the process of relocation in the country has been assumed to be a simple matter for expatriates – they are coming back home (Black, 1992). On the other hand, existing evidence indicates that this is not the case. Often repatriates found that the whole home society and organization has changed during their absence. They may also notice that they themselves have changed a lot during their assignment (Black, 1992). Repatriates often face career problems too: they may find themselves place in a “holding pattern” on their return (Harvey, 1989; Gregersen and Black, 1996). Contrary to their expectations, repatriates may receive jobs with less authority and few possibilities

of utilising their acquired skills (Gomez-Mejia and Balkin, 1987). In this kind of situation, where the expectation and the reality are very different, the repatriates may face a “reverse culture shock” (Alder, 1981; Black, 1992). As an outcome, it has been reported that 10-25 per cent of expatriates leave their company within one year after repatriation (Black, 1992; Solomon, 1995; Black and Gregersen, 1999). The period of expatriate adjustment is a traditionally thought in terms of the U-shaped curve of adjustment known as the culture shock. As stated by Colye and Shortland (1992), culture shock is defined as the emotional disturbance that occurs when individuals find themselves in an uncertain environment, where previous learning or training is not enough for coping. According to Adler (1991), cross-cultural adjustment to an overseas environment has been described as a U-shaped curve and it is called Cultural Shock Cycle (as illustrated below in figure 3).

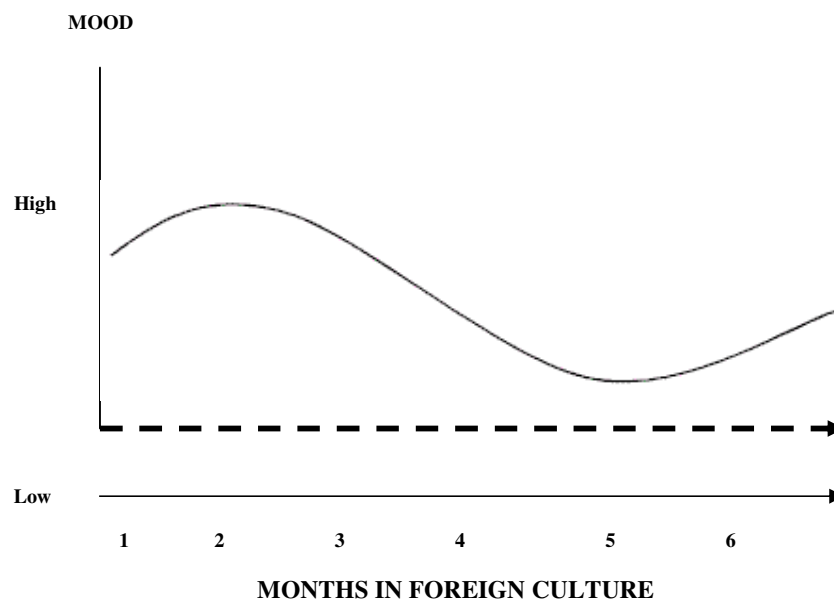


Figure 3: Culture shock cycle (Adler, 1991: 227)

According to Figure 3 model, expatriates arriving in the new environment will have a short honeymoon period where the excitement of the new environment is the predominant feature (at the top of the curve). This is followed by a long culture shock period where disillusion with the new country settles in and morale declines (the curve starts descend until the bottom of the U-shaped curve). In a third stage, the expatriate



learns to act appropriately in the new environment (the curve rises) (Adler, 1991, 228). According to Nicholson (1984), there are two possible ways to adjust to a role transition. The first way to adapt to the change is by personal development, which means that the individual deals with change by altering his or her frame of reference, values, or other identity-related attributes. Another way to manage a new job role is to adopt a role-developing stance, which means that the individual proactively tries to change the work requirements in order to better match his/her desired skills and identity. The outcome of the adaptation will depend on how much the individuals base their job adjustment on role development or personal development. Re-entry experiences frequently surprise returnees. As claimed by Forster (1992), evidence shows that returnees experienced 'reverse culture shock'. Returnees describe stages similar to those of culture shock, that is first being in a very high mood, but then very quickly turning into a low mood and then slowly rising to their normal mood. The lowest time is usually the second and third months back (Adler, 1991). According to Adler (1991), the stages which is seen as the W-shaped curve can be identified as the re-entry adjustment curve (as illustrated below in Figure 4).

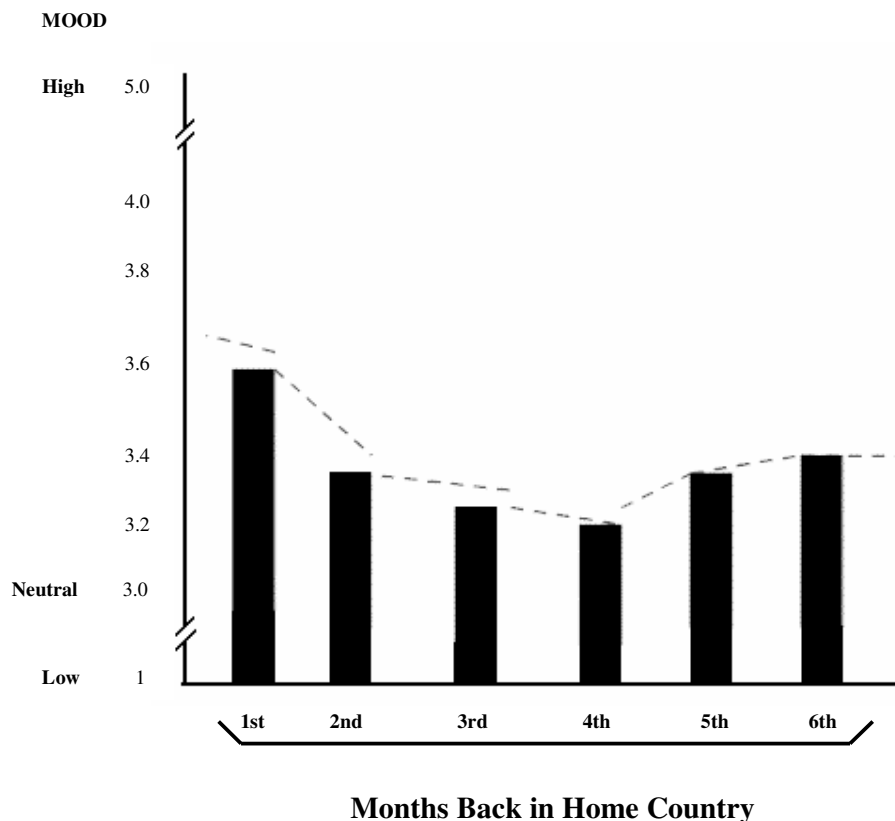


Figure 4: Re-entry Adjustment Curve (Source: Adler, 1991: 234)

Torbjörn (1982) suggested that when the study period of adjustment is extended to cover the repatriation process, the adjustment curve begins to resemble the W-curve as new U-curve begins to develop upon arrival back home (Torbjörn, 1982, 94). Sappinen (1993, 4) examined Finnish expatriates and showed no adjustment evidence to back up the U-curve shape. Sappinen (1993) stated that fluctuation appears during the adjustment process, and more than one low point was found in the U-curve shape. Sappinen (1993) stated that there were more than one adjustment process occurring at the same time some of which may be negative and others positive. It is therefore assumed that the U-shaped curve does not give an accurate adjustment picture when considering the variables that may have effect on the adjustment processes.

Torbjörn (1982, 105) has stated that expatriates who spend time with local nationals may experienced difficulties in their adjustment process much more than those who socialized with expatriates other than their own national or citizen. It has also been suggested that the more successful a person is in adjusting to foreign culture, the harder it will be to readapt when returning to the home country (Adler, 1981). On the basis of repatriate interviews, Alder (1981) reports that, contrary to previous expectations, successful overseas adjusters were more satisfied and in a better mood on reentering their home country than were people who adapted poorly overseas. The length of the assignment has been assumed to be related to repatriation adjustment. Organizations tend too often to treat their expatriates with an “out-of-sight-out-of-mind” attitude while the expatriates expect their relocation in the home country and organization to be untroubled. These attitudes can hinder correct and up-to-date expectations on both sides – especially when the duration of the assignment is long or if the repatriate has been on various assignments. The organization may have gone through some changes. The expatriates may have change during their assignments, as may also their friends and family back home (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Black, 1992; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Harvey, 1982).

### 2.3.2 Culture shock and reverse culture shock

According to Oberg’s (1960) definition: “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of our intercourse” (p. 177). Oberg (1960) stated these cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions or customs,

are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accepted. All of us depend for our peace of mind on hundreds of these cues, even though we may not be consciously aware of them. "When an individual enters a strange culture says Oberg (1960) all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of goodwill he may be, a series of props has been knocked out from under him." Problem solving can be a way of reducing and mitigating culture shock (Adler, 1991, 231). Adler's (1975) definition of culture shock is psychologically more descriptive and explanatory. According to Adler (1975) "Culture shock is primarily a set of emotional reactions to the loss of perceptual reinforcement from one's own culture, to new cultural stimuli which have little or no meaning, and to the misunderstanding of new and diverse experiences. It may encompass feelings of helplessness; irritability; and fears of being cheated, contaminated, injured or disregarded (Adler, 1975, 13)

Culture shock can be seen as an identity crisis during which the expatriate may develop new ways of perceiving himself/herself and the world. The expatriates may notice familiar patterns of behaviour which may be well accepted at home – but might not be appropriate in the new environment in which the expatriates find himself or herself in. According to Adler (1991, 228) cultural shock stems from a breakdown in the expatriate's selective perception and effective interpretation system. Often when expatriate takes up residence in a foreign country there's a period of excitement, and exhilaration when everything seems new and challenging and fascinating. It's not until this honeymoon period ends that the expatriate begins to realise that there are endless subtle differences that leave him/her facing a host of perplexing problems. Expatriates must be able to adjust to their new and often alien environment while effectively delivering their technical and managerial expertises. They must graciously accept their new cultures but not at the expense of not getting their jobs done (Briscoe, 1995, 53).

Reverse culture shock is the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time. People experience reentry in different ways; some individual may experience few, if any, effect of reentry, while others appear to have problems ranging from a few months to a year or longer (Adler,1981). Common problems reported in the literature, at least for some, include academic problems, cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, and interpersonal difficulties (Kittredge, 1988; Martin, 1984;

Raschio, 1987; Sahin, 1990; Zapf; 1991). Returnees have also been reported to experience alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, hostility, compulsive fears, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination (Adler, 1981). Expatriates often face huge cultural shock upon returning home after a foreign assignment, and the cultural shock they experience are similar to those illustrated in figure 4. Reverse culture shock is similar in definition to culture shock - the only slight differences is that the adjustment processes in this case focuses more on the difficulties of re-adapting and re-adjusting to the culture at home after one has lived in another foreign cultural environment for a longer period of time. According to Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) the main difference between reverse culture shock and culture shock was the expectations of the sojourner. Sojourners often expected to return to an unchanged home as unchanged individuals, which was not the case. In other words, one can expect cultural differences when entering a new culture, thereby potentially minimizing the effects of culture shock (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963).

Upon returning home the repatriates are usually on a very good mood and overwhelm with joy that will last for a month or two as they arrived home and feel exited to see their relatives at home, workplace colleagues at home, and other friends that they may have left behind during their foreign assignment abroad. Adler (1991, 235) stated that repatriates usually start to feel normal after six months upon arrival in the home country. Other studies (e.g, Adler, 1986; 1985; Harris & Moran, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991, 673) indicated that repatriates may take even much longer time to readjust fully on average between a year to a year and half. Further, Harris and Moran (1991, 145) noted that some repatriates may never make the adjustments needed and may live as foreigners in their own home country. There has also been an assumption that reentry expectation negatively influence reverse culture shock to a certain extent. Reverse culture can be complicated for most of the repatriates and literatures in this field are not consistent in explaining the severity of complications and the needs of the returnees.

### 2.3.3 Reduction of uncertainty

Earlier studies of repatriation states that the key components of readjustment are to reduce uncertainty and inaccurate expectations, and that these components are central

for successful repatriation. By knowing what is acceptable behaviour in a country will reduce the uncertainty, but many repatriates seem to lack an up to date understanding of the country when they return home, and hence their uncertainty on how to address certain issues increase. Furthermore, inaccurate expectation by the individuals about the international assignment and what it can offer, and the gap between the repatriates' expectations and the reality that is facing them when returning home, have a significant impact on the repatriation's success or failure. Therefore, by limiting and being aware of the factors that might increase uncertainty and inaccurate expectations help is needed to ease the repatriation which could further determine the success of the assignment (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Linehan & Scullion, 2002). The length of the international assignment has a negative impact on readjustment since a longer period of time spent abroad, more changes have occurred both within the organization, individual, and the general environment. This creates more inaccurate expectations and uncertainty, and provide more unrealistic picture of the home country when returning home (Suutari & Välimaa, 2002). During foreign assignments the expatriates and their spouses enters into a new environment that they lack knowledge about, and do not know what behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate in the environment in which they find themselves in. Upon learning and behaving in an appropriate manner in the environment or country, the level of uncertainty for the expatriate in the country may some how reduce. Many repatriates do not realize that they lack a current and accurate understanding of their home country. This may lead them to face a culture shock, mainly a set of negative affective reactions to encounters that demonstrate to repatriates that they lack a complete and up to date understanding of their home country (Oberg, 1960; Torbjörn, 1982; Black & Gregersen, 1991, 672). According to Black and Gregersen (1991) factors that reduce uncertainty level may assist repatriation adjustment, and factors that increase the uncertainty level may decrease the repatriation adjustment. Bell & Staw (1989) stressed that when individuals enter new and unfamiliar environments they should re-establish themselves to a certain level of control that could be divided into two forms: the predictive control and the behavioural control.

To facilitate the re-entry stage for the repatriates, their spouses, and capture the repatriates' international knowledge and skills, the importance of repatriation program is of vital concern. Clear policies and practices from the organizations' point of view regarding repatriation will reduce uncertainty and inaccurate expectations among the repatriates, and assist the ease of the re-entry (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Companies

that recognize that repatriation is a time of confusion for many employees, and provide them with career guidance and enable them to put their international experience to work, are making their human resource investments in international assignments more successful (Black & Gregersen, 1999).

Uncertainty is always present in varying degrees in organizational life, as Weick (2001, 46) put it: “ambiguity is never fully removed, it is part of the normal context of organizational action”. Concerning this kind of reality, Weick (2001, 376) further argues that an attitude that balances knowing and doubt is a basic principle of adaptation. He also says that face-to-face interaction rather than routines offers better possibilities to keep up with change in rapidly changing environments, and to see the core of organizing rather than routines (Weick, 2001, 114). Since the critical return phase can be full of uncertainty, it seems to be more important for individuals to remain flexible rather than to have rigid expectations. This kind of argumentation gives more room for repatriates themselves to be the active agents of their return, and to control everything that is important for them on their return. It could also be argued that the feeling of being able to control the return reduces the uncertainty a returnee experiences and increases the utilization of active coping strategies when he or she faces disappointments.

## **2.4 FACETS OF REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT**

Researchers conceptualising readjustment have identified three specific dimensions, namely the readjustment to work, readjustment to interacting with home nationals, and readjustment to the general environment (Black et al., 1992a, 221-257). The first dimension, readjustment to work, refers to the degree to which the individual feels psychological comfort about his or her new work role and performs at an acceptable level in his or her job (Black, 1988). The second dimension, interaction with home country nationals, refers to the degree to which the repatriate feels psychological comfort about being in contact with home country nationals and to his or her ability and desire to develop his or her interaction with them (Gregersen and Black, 1990). The third dimension, readjustment to the general non-work environment, refers to the degree to which the repatriate feels satisfaction in the general environment in his/her own home country.

The general environment in the home country is usually underestimated by the returning repatriates who did not take into consideration the changes that has taken place in their home country while they were working and staying abroad. According to Feldman et al., (1993) repatriates seldomly prepared to find the place they call “home” has changed considerably. Also, repatriates are not prepared for the dramatic transformation that has taken place at home, and the endless small changes that have occurred during the course of a global assignment (Black & Gregersen, 1992). The repatriates observed there is feeling of being left out or left behind (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987), as they have not been part of the changes that have occurred during their absence from home. As repatriates experience the many changes in the environment that they now find themselves in they might also notice the dramatic shift that has taken place in the organization that they left behind years back during the assignment abroad.

In relation to friends and family Black and Gregersen (1999b) stressed there is often an expectation that the repatriates may just pick up from where they left off with their colleagues, friends, and family, and not taken serious the changes that has taken place. Upon returning to their home country the repatriates will discover changes in the way family members and friends think about life and how different they see the world. The warm and friendly relationship that once exist between the repatriates and their extended family and friends diminished to some extent due to the repatriates long absence from home, and it takes time for family members and friends to continue the friendly relationship that once exist before the repatriates trip abroad. Returnees expect to be able to move back into the community, renew friendships, re establish both business and social contacts and fit easily into their former life-style. Reality may, in fact, be very different, as they come back to a totally new environment which is neither the world they knew, nor the world they were expecting. Home does not really feel like home at all (Hurn, 1999). Some returnees report envy and jealousy from friends and extended family members. Family relationships are challenges through this adjustment period by a myriad of other causes (Wozniak, 1997). Reestablishment of social systems and readjusting to work and school can be difficult transitions. Everyone in the family system often senses a reduction in life style, increased family stress, disorientation, and dissatisfaction (Harvey, 1982).

Figure 5 illustrates the actual adjustment factors after the transfer, and the factors in the framework which influences the adjustment. According to Black et al. (1992a), there

are several factors affecting repatriation adjustment as illustrated in the framework below. The framework consisted of two parts. The first part on the left hand side is Pre-return adjustment which has to do with different sources of information that affects the way in which expatriate's develop expectations upon return. The second part on the right hand side is Post-return adjustments which highlight such factors as Individual Variables, Job Variables, Organizational Variables and Nonwork Variables that affects the repatriation process. Further discussion about the factors that influences the repatriation adjustment would be presented below figure 5.

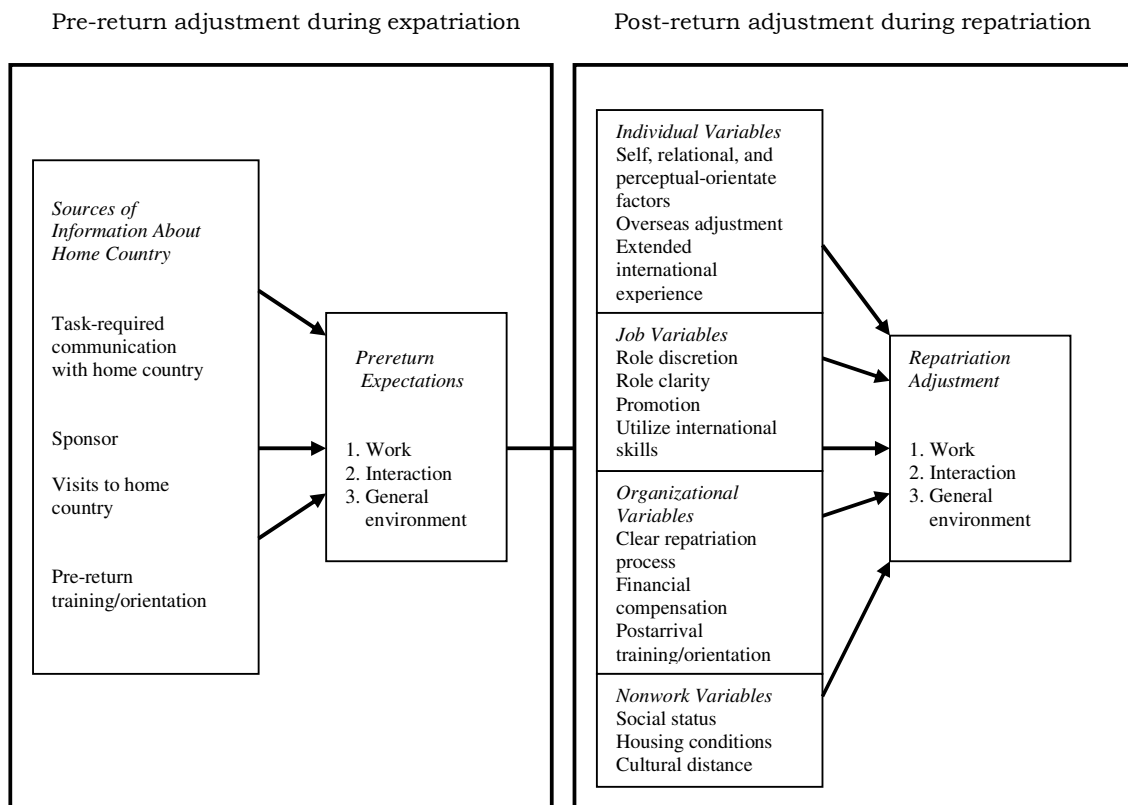


Figure 5. Basic Framework of Repatriation Adjustment (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall (1992, 230).



## **2.5 FACTORS IMPACTING REPATRIATION ADJUSTMENT**

### **2.5.1 Pre-return adjustment**

The nature of pre-return adjustment is mainly cognitive: before the actual return people start to make changes in their mental maps of what working and living will be like in their home country. After living abroad for several years, most expatriates acquire new mental maps and rules of behaviour upon returning home which may lead to difficulties as they try to settle down. Thus, successful pre-return repatriation adjustment demands modifications of these maps. By modifying the mental map, repatriates can engage in efforts of predictive control over their move. The actual, in-country repatriation adjustment, and the success of it is influenced by both predictive and behavioural control. Through predictive control an individual learns to know what is expected of him or her and what rewards or punishments are likely to be associated with a single action or set of behaviours. Thus, successful repatriation adjustment involves exhibiting behaviours that are considered appropriate in the repatriate's home culture (Black et al., 1992a, 221-231).

The factors which are identified as sources of information about the home country are grouped into the following categories: task-required communication with home country, sponsor, visit to home country, pre-return training or orientation. These factors which influences the repatriates' expectations could be explain in brief below.

*Communication:* According to some research, the information which is provided by the home organization/company prior to the return is an important element of pre-return adjustment because of the many possible changes in the home organization/company and changes in the non-work environment. To have up-to-date information about both the positive and negative changes in the home company may helps the expatriate to form a more realistic expectations regarding the return (Dowling et al. 1999, 208; Black et al. 1992a, 231). This kind of information flow can be facilitated in many ways, for instance, by sending newspapers and videos to the expatriates. Today, people may use the Internet for acquiring knowledge about their home country. Expatriates can also perceive changes during visits to the home company, for example, in the living environment and among their friends. Similarly, colleagues in the home company can affect the expectations of the expatriates themselves (Adler, 1991, 246; Black et al., 1992a, 232; Solomon, 1995).

This kind of communication can diminish an expatriate's 'anomie' and feelings of loneliness (Harris and Moran 1996, 153).

*Sponsor/mentor:* An organizational sponsor, mentor or "godparent" can help returning expatriates to effectively adjust to and communicate with home-country people during repatriation. A formally or informally assigned mentor can provide the expatriate with important information about structural changes, strategic shifts, political coups at work, promotion opportunities, and general job-related and company-related knowledge (Black et al. 1992a, 231). This information might not help the expatriate to adjust to the general culture; however, it might help them to successfully adjust to work and communicating with home company people upon return (Black et al., 1992).

*Visit to home country:* The other significant source of information about the home country and the home organization could be obtained through regular home visits during the international assignment. By making visits to the home country frequently the expatriate and his/her family have the opportunity to acquire information about work related changes, social changes, and general home country changes (Black et al., 1992a). These visits also allow colleagues and friends to notice changes in the expatriate (Black & Gregersen, 1999).

*Pre-return training/orientation:* Pre-return training and orientation from the home organization is vital in terms of easing the uncertainty about the return to the home country. Returnees can be provided with repatriation training about the re-entry process, potential problems, and the means for dealing with them. This can be assumed to diminish uncertainty about the return and thus facilitating it. When expatriates re-enter their home country it might feel quite foreign and therefore pre-return training can be useful for the repatriates (Black et al. (1992b). Also, it has been proposed that an increased understanding of the repatriation process on the part of expatriate can significantly facilitate the return (Harvey 1989). The basic premise is that "if appropriate pre-return adjustments are made, the actual adjustment in the new international setting will be easier and quicker" (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991, 305).

## 2.6 Post-return adjustment

Repatriation adjustment is affected by four variables as shown in the framework of repatriation adjustment in figure 5. These variables are: *individual variables*, *job variables*, *organizational variables*, and *non-work variables* (Black, 1990, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1990b, 1991). While these variables are discussed separately in the next coming section below, the reality is that these are not separate entities as research shows the interaction of these variables is great (Black & Gregersen, 1998).

### 2.6.1 Individual variables

The first category of individual variables consists of self-orientated factors such as strength of self-image. According to several scholars, the precondition and most important underlying process in cross-cultural adjustment is the maintenance and repair of one's self image, and a feeling of being able to control or deal with unexpected situations in a new environment (Black et al., 1992). Related to this, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) talk about self-respect, self-confidence, and skills and activities which help to maintain one's mental well-being. The maintenance of mental and social well-being can work as an effective buffer against stress in new or surprising situations. The important skills for achieving this are reinforcement substitution, stress reduction and technical competence. These variables, as with expatriate adjustment, are likely to have a positive impact on repatriation adjustment. Reinforcement substitution refers to "replacing activities that bring pleasure and happiness in the home culture with similar – yet different – activities that exist in the host culture" (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985, 40). Expatriates' ability to deal with frustrations is important for successful adjustment and effective productivity. Interpersonal conflict, financial difficulties, differences in housing, climate, food and so on, can cause such frustrations (Abe and Wiseman, 1983). Research suggests that social skills are important in every dimension of adjustment. These skills enable people to meet and interact with people in everyday situations.

Overseas adjustment and extended international experience are also grouped as individual variables. Self-orientated factors (such as the strength of self-image), relational-orientated factors (language proficiency and willingness to communicate with host nationals) and perceptual-orientated factors (ability to understand and grasp

invisible cultural maps and rules) can help people to adjust during overseas assignment. But especially those who have been in cultures very different from their home culture and who have stayed abroad for extended periods, either through sequential international assignments or unusually long stays in them, can experience significant adjustment challenges during repatriation. When the host country has been the expatriate's point of reference, the dissimilarity between the host and home country increases the uncertainty and unfamiliarity of the home country (Black et al., 1992a, 233-234; Black, 1994).

Scholars have also argued that the length of time of the most recent overseas assignment and the total time spent overseas influences how much uncertainty the expatriates experience when they face the return. The longer individuals have been away from their home country, the more it might have changed. Individuals themselves have changed as well, thus increasing the experience of uncertainty (Black, 1994). This kind of argumentation has been supported by many research results (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Forster, 1994; Suutari and Välimaa, 2002).

#### 2.6.2 Job variables

After returning home, there are several factors that can facilitate or inhibit repatriates' adjustment to work. One of the main predictors of repatriation success for the employee is job placement upon reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1998, Black et al., 1999) as the general satisfaction with repatriation is strongly related to that of the foreign assignment on career goals (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). According to Black & Gregersen (1990a, 1991, 1999a) many repatriates return home without specific job assignment; 68% were unsure of the job they would have prior to reentry and one third of repatriates surveyed were in temporary assignments three months after returning home (Harvey, 1982). Promotion as job variable affects repatriates' work adjustment, and according to Adler (1981) some repatriates report demotions or decreased rates of advancement. In a study of American repatriates, only 7% of respondents were promised a promotion upon return (Tung, 1998), and another study revealed more than 75% of repatriates felt their new position was a demotion compared to the job they held overseas (Black & Gregersen, 1991, 1992, 1999a). Repatriates are often faced with loss of autonomy and authority, loss of career direction, loss of track records domestically, limited or no opportunities to

use their foreign skills, and reduced productivity (Adler, 1981; Brewster, 1997; Stroh et al., 1998). These problems persist due to lack of ineffective planning for the return of expatriates, as less than 5% of firms give more than six months' notice of their return home (Windharn International, 1998).

Scholars have found that companies often do not fully utilize expatriates' work experience. The repatriate's career development possibilities are uncertain, and actually his or her position can be lower in the home organization than before expatriation (Adler, 1997, 245; Dowling et al., 1999, 210). Positions can be temporary, ill-defined, or not correspond to the levels of challenges a repatriate seeks. Thus, these conditions are very likely to increase the probability that a repatriate leaves the company (Gates, 1996). This kind of uncertainty associated with career development has been found to negatively affect the expatriate's performance during the last months of the foreign assignment and to slow down the repatriation adaptation. It can also increase the likelihood of inter-organizational moves (Forster, 1994). Researchers have pointed out that linking international assignments to the repatriate's career development provides better utilization of their international work experience, and commits employees more to their company (Tung, 1988; Feldman and Thompson, 1993; Gates, 1996).

Research shows that meeting or exceeding job expectations leads to higher levels of adjustment and job performance than those whose expectations were undermet (Adler, 1981; Black, 1992). Expectations play a crucial role in repatriation because of the hope and reality that the repatriate is looking forward to when he/she return back home. Failure to meet expectations may reduce loyalty and commitment to the home organization (Andreason & Kinneer 2004). The issue with reverse culture shock is often unexpected and occurs because repatriates don't expect they have to adjust, nor do corporations, friends, and family believe any adjustment is necessary (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). Repatriates go with the perception that they will be rewarded by their companies upon return, expect to start up where they left off with friends and family, and expect everything to be the same as they left. The more surprised returnees are by negative changes, the less efficient and effective the adjustment process (Adler, 1981; Black & Gregersen, 1999b; Stroh et al., 1998).

Black and Gregersen (1999b) described how unrealistic expectations develop, based upon their model of the four "C"s. According to Black and Gregersen (1999b)

expatriates leave their home country where they were in “Control” of their environment, they felt “Comfortable”, “Competent”, and they received “Confirmation” in all situations. Once overseas, expatriates lose the four “C”s during the adjustment to the foreign country, they miss the four “C”s they had back home, and they overstate how impressive the four “C”s were at home. Such situation creates an unrealistic expectation about life at home which further leads to the repatriation adjustment problems. The models of reentry, adaptation, and adjustment are founded on the belief that the primary theoretical process related to repatriation adjustment is uncertainty reduction: Factors that reduce uncertainty will facilitate adjustment, while factors increasing uncertainty will inhibit adjustment (Black et al., 1992). The reduction of uncertainty means developing accurate expectations which may lead to better repatriation adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1998). The adjustment transition may become much easier if the repatriates expectations are met and fulfilled by the organization that they have returned to work for back in their home country.

Role discretion is also important, as it appears to have the strongest impact on work adjustment (Black, 1994; Black & Gregersen, 1991), and allows employees to adapt their work role to themselves rather than adapting to the situation (Black et al., 1991). Greater role discretion allows repatriates use of previous behaviours which helps reduce the uncertainty of a new situation. Positive correlation between role discretion and work adaptation has been found in many research studies (Black and Gregersen, 1991a, 1991c; Black, 1988, 1993; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Suutari and Välimaa, 2002)

### 2.6.3 Organizational variables

A clear repatriation process, sufficient financial compensation and postarrival training or orientation are specific organizational variables that are important during return adjustment. Based on the premise of uncertainty reduction it has been argued that the clarity of the preparation process is an important organizational pre-return variable that influences adjustment (see e.g. Black and Gregersen, 1991b; Gregersen and Stroh 1997). Scholars have pointed out the need to pay attention to the whole repatriation process and the politics associated with it (Tung, 1988; Black and Gregersen, 1991b). Black et al. (1992, 238) indicated that when the repatriation process was not clear, the managers were uncertain and concerned about matters such as their return positions, career

progression, compensation equity and taxation assistance. A significant element of the clarity of the repatriation process is whether expatriates are informed about the completion of their current assignment early enough.

Repatriation adjustment impacts the employee's commitment to the organization upon repatriation. According to Gregersen and Black (1996) a firm's valuing international experience was the primary correlation to its organizational commitment. Also, when a company considers role clarity, role discretion, repatriation compensation, and values international experience, there is a positive relationship to organizational commitment (Gregersen, 1992). The period of notice given to the repatriate can have critical bearings on adjustment. A longer preparation time facilitates the making of effective plans. Moreover, there are many practical issues that need preparation (Black, 1994). Seeing that repatriation is a potentially stressful life event, a longer preparation time might be an important facilitator of adjustment and may give a sense of control over events for returning individuals (Forster, 1994; Mendenhall, Punnet and Ricks, 1995). Thus, the formation of realistic expectations on/the return has been suggested to be the key variable for the clarity of the return (Hammer & Rogan, 1998), and has been empirically confirmed to relate to higher levels of repatriation adjustment (Black, 1992; Stroh, Gregersen and Black, 2000).

One of the most difficult problems encountered and experience by repatriates is that of financial issue. According to Harvey (1982) latent financial problems evolved when returning to the domestic compensation levels, tax consequences, and loss of allowances including housing, automobile, education, travel, and cost-of-living. While financial pressures may create one of the highest levels of stress, financial issues may be more short term than other repatriation issues (Harvey, 1989). According to Black (1992) and Gregersen (1998) 75% of American, 64% of Japanese, and 78% of Finnish repatriates experienced reduces standards of living upon returning to their home country. These problems are further exacerbated by the start-up costs of purchasing a house, a vehicle or two, and possibly new cloths to better suit the climate (Piet-Pelon & Hornby, 1992). With all these huge costs for the repatriate and their family who are already in a state of shock comes lot of stress as they try to settle down in their home country. Financial problems can create dissent between spouses and negatively impact the spouses' adjustment to the general environment (Black & Gregersen, 1999b). Financial changes are part of the repatriation experience that affects the repatriates' lifestyle as their

domestic wage decrease and become smaller when compared to the international compensation packages they once received.

Many expatriates experience a great downward shift in their living standards after returning from a global assignment. Because non-monetary rewards are generally quite low, repatriates pay particular attention to financial compensation and their expected standards of living after global assignments (Black et al., 1992a, 239). The formation of realistic expectations on the return can be helped by providing returnees with repatriation training about the re-entry process, addressing potential problems and the means for dealing with them. This can be assumed to diminish uncertainty about the return and thus facilitating it. It has been proposed that an increased understanding of the repatriation process on the part of the expatriate can significantly facilitate the return (Harvey, 1989; Mendenhall et al., 1995).

Upon reentry the repatriates often feel out of touch with the corporate culture they experience when they return, which may have changed considerably while they were overseas. Typically, repatriates are reassigned to positions similar to the ones they left two or three years before (Briscoe, 1995). During the assignment abroad the company may have downsized and changed dramatically, making the organization seem completely foreign to the repatriate (Black & Gregersen, 1992). Due to the long absent from the home country organization for a number of years, the expatriates may lose touch with the day-to-day operations and changes that may have occur in the organization's culture which makes the repatriate feel like he/she doesn't fit in anymore (Engen, 1995). According to Stroh et al (1998) organizational difficulties of reentry are complicated when home country executives are not aware of the expectations of their repatriates. After returning home the repatriates wanted to use their new skill and knowledge (Brewster, 1997), but the more effective the returnees rated themselves about the skills and knowledge that they have acquired abroad the more ineffective they were rated by their colleagues at home who do not know how to value their foreign work experience (Adler, 1981). Managers at home often tend to exhibit xenophobia (fear of foreign things or ideas), and prefer repatriates who do not exhibit "foreign" characteristics and do not utilize their international skills (Adler, 1981). Home country-managers evaluated returnees much favourably when they did not have foreign characteristics or put in practice their cross-cultural experience and ideas at the home-



base working place. Repatriates adjustment to the organization that they were once part of at home can be very difficult and confusing due to their long absence abroad.

#### 2.6.4 Non-work variables

Non-work variables include many variables of adjustment including the political, social, cultural, and economic conditions in the home country. After coming home, there are likely to be changes in the repatriates' as well as their families' social status. They lose their formal status of being foreigners. "During an overseas assignment, expatriates typically feel like big fish in a little pond. After coming home, they are little fish in a big pond" (Black et al., 1992a, 240-241). Many repatriates faces mammoth challenges as they try to readjust to the general living environment in which they find themselves in after their foreign assignment abroad. Repatriates usually underestimate the changes that have taken place in their home country while they were working abroad. According to Feldman et al., (1993) repatriates are seldomly prepared to find the place they call "home" has changed considerably. Also, repatriates are not prepared for the dramatic transformation that has taken place at home, and the endless small changes that have occurred during the course of a global assignment (Black & Gregersen, 1992). The repatriates observed there is feeling of being left out or left behind (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987), as they have not been part of the changes that have occurred during their absence from home. As repatriates experience the many changes in the environment that they now find themselves in, they may also notice the dramatic shift that has taken place in the organization that they left behind years back during the assignment abroad.

The role changes that spouses go through in the return phase also pose challenges to their adjustment (Solomon, 1995; Adler, 1997, 276-77). The spouse's cross-cultural adjustment has been found to be a major factor in returnees' adjustment. Similarly, as with repatriates' adjustment, other family members' readjustment is influenced by the length of the assignment, overseas adjustment, and extended international experience. Members of the repatriate family can feel like strangers in their own homeland (Torbiörn, 1982, 42; Black et al., 1992a, 17). When coming home the spouse faces the challenges of reconnecting in some ways to the home country. The returnee's spouse can find herself in a situation in which she has to cope alone, having probably lost many of her former contacts during expatriation (Harvey, 1982). Researchers have found the three factors of

primary importance relating to non-work adjustment variables are *cultural distance*, *shifts in social status* and *changes in housing conditions* (Black & Gregersen, 1992; Black et al., 1991a). These factors are explained in brief in the following section.

*Cultural distance* involves the cultural distances between the home country and the host country which may have influence the repatriate's life during the assignment abroad. According to Black et al. (1991) expatriates form their mental maps and behavioural rules according to the culture of the host country. The start of the international assignment if referred to as expatriation, involving a move to a foreign culture and job-related geographic transfer (Adler, 1981; Black et al. 1992b).

*Social status* leads to stress as repatriate's social status drop upon returning home (Black et al., 1991a) as well as a loss of personal and professional status (McDonald, 1993). The losses in social status are said to have a negative impact on all the facets of repatriation adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). While staying abroad, repatriates may have enjoyed an active social life and enjoyed a formal status of being foreigners. The loss of a way of life usually includes a loss of lifestyle, loss of cultural advantages, loss of friends, and loss of a sense of freedom (Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). Some repatriates face a sense of loss in their jobs where they have become accustomed to being a "big fish in a little pond" during the international assignment and must now adapt to being a "little fish in a big pond" at home (Black & Gregersen, 1998). The loss of personal status which the repatriates have been enjoying while staying abroad usually disappeared when the repatriates return to their home country, and this loss of status usually cause financial hardship for the repatriates and their family who can no longer afford the luxury that they have once been used to during the foreign mission abroad. There is usually a loss of personal status for many of the repatriates especially for those expatriates who have repatriated from the developing countries where they usually have the opportunity to stay in luxurious houses, having fanciful cars with sometimes own private chauffeur and security, having the opportunity to send their children to expensive international private schools, hire maid or servant for less than 10 US dollars a month in order to clean their house, launder and ironing their cloths while they make exotic holiday trip to other parts of the world.

*Housing conditions* can significantly influence the repatriate's adjustment for the returnees and their family (Black, 1994), and the situation could even get worse if the

repatriate has four or more family members to care for during the repatriation. Problems typically concern what type of housing arrangements will be available, what area repatriates will live in, and whether it will be possible to get comparable housing upon returning to the home country (Black et al., 1992a, 241). According to Black and Gregersen (1999) there are three determinants of issues related to housing and they include: (1) repair costs to the house because of previous tenant who was occupying the house during the assignment including the costs for staying in a hotel with the family while repairing is going on in the repatriate's house, (2) inconvenience in staying in a hotel with family or moving out from the hotel to another temporary dwelling because of the huge costs involved, and (3) finding out that one is unable to meet the rising costs of housing upon returning to the home country (Black and Gregersen, 1999). Locating a suitable house for the repatriates upon returning to the home country seriously affects the adjustment of repatriates and their family.

## **2.7 COPING STRATEGIES DURING TRANSITION**

Adjustment theorists (Black, 1988; Nicholson, 1984; Mendenhall et al., 1995, 423) suggest that role discretion allows individuals to adjust to their work role by changing the role to fit the individual. Thus, it makes it possible for the individual to utilize past, familiar behaviours. Also, when being able to modify his or her role, an individual can create a more predictable and controllable role that facilitates the transition. This reduces some of the uncertainty associated with the new job and facilitates the adjustment. Positive correlation between role discretion and work adaptation has been found in many research studies such as those of (Black and Gregersen, 1991, 1991; Black, 1993; Gregersen and Stroh, 1997; Suutari and Välimaa, 2002). Suutari and Välimaa (2002) found that when an individual has some influence on the work he or she is doing, it facilitates his or her adjustment to the job. Greater role discretion has also been noticed to have a spill-over effect on satisfaction in general.

When identifying repatriates' coping strategies at work some of the ideas on work role transitions introduced by Nicholson (1984) are useful. Nicholson (1984) focuses on the change to a new work role, and he argues that work role transitions can have profound significance for the future development of individuals and their organizations. Nicholson's theoretical interest was in the inter-relatedness of change and stability, and

in the interaction between individuals and social systems. The coping perspective has very rarely been applied to repatriation adjustment. One exception is Adler (1981), who has contributed strongly to the early research on returning expatriates. Adler (1981) constructed a typology of re-enterers by analysing their attitudes to re-entry. She identified four different coping modes to re-entry as illustrated below in figure 6: *proactive*, *resocialized*, *alienated*, and *rebellious* re-enterers. She concluded that ‘active re-enterers attempt to change both themselves and their re-entry environment in order to fit better into the organization, whereas passive re-enterers do not attempt such changes at all’ (Adler 1981, 354). According to Adler (1981) re-enterers defined as proactive are both “optimistic and active”; resocialized re-enterers are “optimistic and passive”; alienated re-enterers are “pessimistic and passive”; and rebellious re-enterers are “pessimistic and active”.

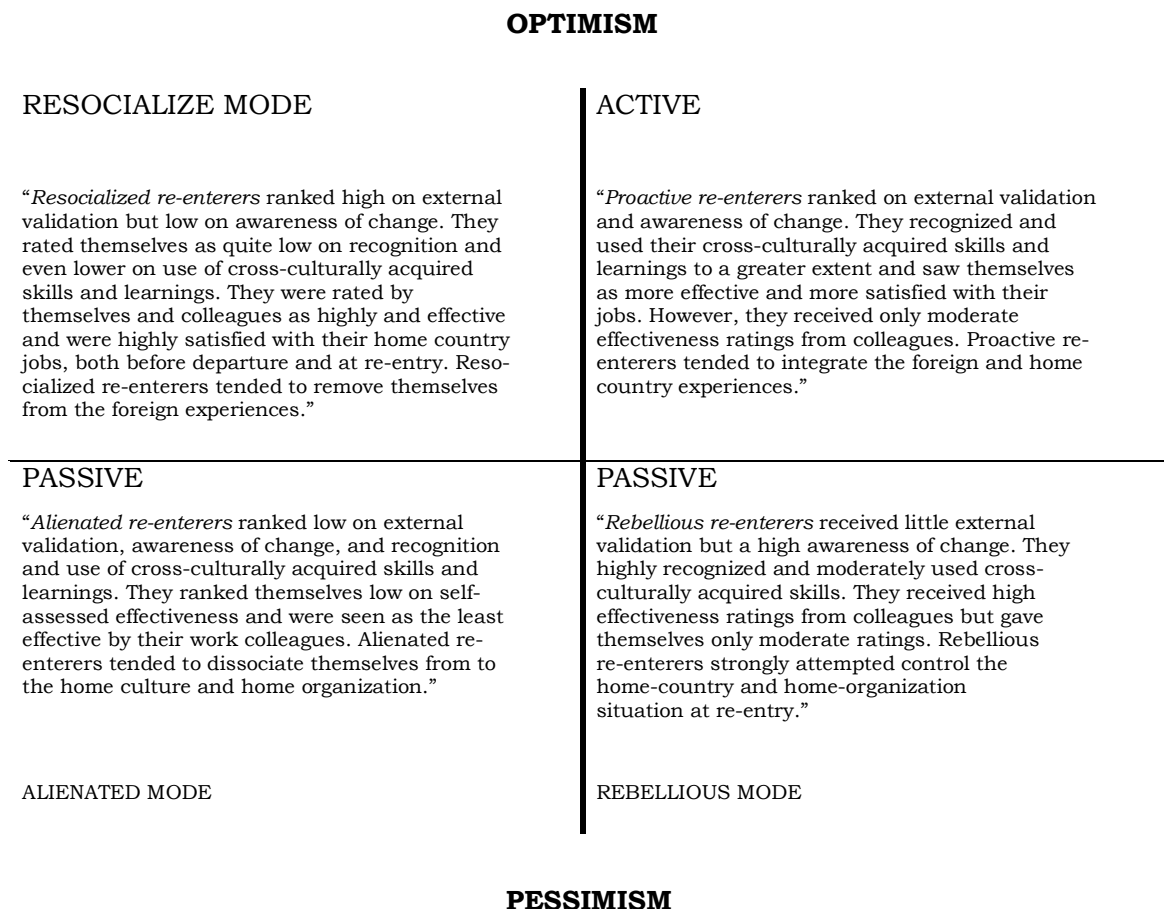


Figure 6. Re-entry coping modes (Adler 1981)

Selmer (1999) further concluded that many repatriates choose a transition strategy of (1) *resocialization*, in which they neither recognize nor use their globally acquired skills, but distance themselves from their global experience and just try to fit back in. Others, particularly those who believe they cannot fit back in, become (2) *alienated* and continue to see the foreign societal and organizational culture as better than their own. These are often those who had “gone native” during the foreign assignment and may even want to return. Both of these transition strategies make repatriation readjustment more difficult and prevent firms from utilizing globally acquired skills. A more productive strategy, in contrast is, a (3) *proactive* strategy in which repatriates reject neither their own nor the foreign culture; rather they combine the best aspects of both and contribute to their firms by creating new, synergistic ways of perceiving and working in their organizations, based on their experiences at home and abroad. While it is obvious that repatriation is influenced by various elements for those involved the dynamics of it all has not yet been sufficiently explored by previous research. Similarly, much of the content of the phenomenon of repatriation is still unknown.

## **2.8 THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATION IN REPATRIATION**

### **2.8.1 The essence of effective repatriation**

The challenges that take place on the return of an expatriate are today well documented (Black et al., 1992a; Brewster & Suutari, 2001). According to Poe (2000) and Solomon (2001), a list of action items associated with effective repatriation can be derived from: (1) training managers before they leave, (2) supporting them while they are abroad, and (3) acculturating them upon their return. Despite these central actions, many organizations fail to implement a comprehensive plan or still have problem with their repatriation processes. Moreover, not all recommended actions are equally effective or advisable for every expatriate and repatriate’s situation. According to research firms that manage repatriation processes effectively planned beforehand is often much of what will occur after the expatriate’s return. Preplanning could be crucial since foreign assignments are characterized by high level of uncertainty, anxiety, and sometimes frustration for the expatriates during their time abroad. If planning for repatriation is not done properly, the outcome would be devastating for the repatriate in terms of his/her job position and leaving condition in the home country.

When making efforts to reintegrate the returning expatriate into the domestic organization, the firms should consider the backgrounds and experience of the repatriate's future supervisor and co-workers. Often these people have little or no international experience, and so they have difficulty understanding and working around the challenges of repatriation (Black et al., 1992, 253). The domestic superiors are often not only ignorant of the problems the expatriates might be experiencing upon return but also unable to recognize the acquired skills and increased ability of the repatriates. There are two reasons for this. First, they compare the repatriates' performance with that of his/her previous job performance, and do not take into consideration the knowledge and experience that the repatriate may have acquired or accumulated during his/her foreign assignment. The home organization should make sure that the home organization supervisors and employees are receptive to the repatriate. Firms should provide training and orientation to expatriate's co-workers and supervisors in order for them to show understanding and be supportive to the repatriation process (Black et al., 1992).

Organizations provide more widely pre-departure training programs to expatriates than they provide repatriation assistance (Harvey, 1982). Organization must recognize that repatriation is a period of major change professionally and personally. The expatriate's return will present its own set of challenges which required an equivalent amount of attention as when they are on assignment. The complex issues that surface upon reentry have a direct impact on the expatriate, the family members, and the company itself (Black and Gregersen, 1991). Several repatriates feel frustrated with the re-entry phase, and the nonchalant attitude from the home organization, where the repatriates are not given the opportunity to put their foreign experiences to work (Hurn, 1999). During the international assignment the repatriates generally have been autonomous, well compensated, and has been working as a big fish in a little pond. When returning home, the repatriates often encounter an organization that does not know how to make use of or value the repatriates' new skills into work, or in worst case scenario does not care (Solomon, 1995). This lack of understanding and knowledge from companies in how to integrate repatriates into the organization and utilize the experiences gained during the international assignment is a factor that often leads to repatriates leaving the firm or organization within a year after returning home. When returning home, repatriates often are offered job positions with less authority which is perceived by the repatriates as a demotion compared to their position abroad (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Further, Black & Gregersen (1999) stated that 25% of repatriates leave their company for another

competing company in the first year after repatriation because of the systematic repatriation programs that the company may lack.

Black & Gregersen (1999) stressed the importance of having a well-defined repatriation program, and where the money spent on these programs is a small price to pay for retaining the people with this global insight and experience. Like Riusala & Suutari (2000), Black & Gregersen (1999) state different steps to take in order to ease the re-entry. The first preparations should be made by the headquarters three to six months before the future repatriate returns in order to start to think about the next assignment or work position that the expatriate has in the home organization. The home organization needs to review the expatriate's career path and job placement upon repatriation (Black et al., 1999, 228). Job placement would be ideally done well in advance of home coming, as this reduces the stress of returning home (Suutari & Välimaa, 2002, 632; Suutari & Brewster, 2003, 1136). Bonache et al (2001) state that creating correct expectations play a central role for a successful repatriation. Therefore it is essential to provide better career support programs for the repatriate in order to minimize possible inaccurate expectations, and also include the repatriate's family in this support program, which help them to integrate easily back into the society and the organization.

Hammer, Hart and Rogan (1998) stress that the key in repatriation program is a flexible communication between the repatriate and the home organization, both before departure and upon return. By having extensive communication concerning expectations about the assignment, and future career opportunities, the amount of uncertainty for the expatriate is decreased. Continuous contact during the foreign assignment between the expatriate and the firm do not only facilitates the re-assessment of the expatriate's career path and purpose of the assignment, but helps the individual to anticipate the changes and challenges upon repatriation as well (Harvey, 1982, 58; Dowling et al., 1993, 85). The essence of the organization's contact is to demonstrate to the expatriate that the foreign assignment is important to the home organization, which may further increase the expatriate's motivation and moral as well as making the expatriate feel less isolated and more connected to the home organization (Jassawalla et. al., 2004, 42). Further, Tung (1988) points out maintaining constant communication between the expatriate and the home organization is to build commitment between the parties, and make the expatriate feel like he or she is a part of the company in spite of the absence from the home country and organization. This communication could be delivered through

newspapers, mails, or other information from the home organization. Harvey (1989) further adds an aspect that should be taken into consideration in the repatriation program is financial assistance from the company in order to help ease the financial burden for the repatriates and their spouse when they arrived in the home country.

Keeping in contact is not the sole responsibility of the organization. Returnees who maintain close contact with the home organization while abroad and who thus are aware of both the positive and negative changes in themselves, their organization, their industry, and their country tend to be more proactive, more effective, and more satisfied at re-entry (Adler, 1997, 252). A well design expatriate management programme should follow a circular process, beginning with the initial assessment selection of candidates, followed by cross-cultural preparation, global career management, completion of the international business objective and finishing with repatriation (Solomon, 1995). Poorly managed repatriation program usually have negative impact on the organization. First, it leads to high level of repatriate dissatisfaction with the repatriation process in general and the level of support received from the home organization in particular. Second, it leads to the hesitation of the repatriating employee to accept another foreign assignment (Harvey, 1982). Also it leads to a high turnover rate, particularly in the first year after repatriation. The returnees generally see themselves as accomplishing relatively little during their first few months back home in comparison with the greater breath and challenge of their work abroad (Adler, 1997, 246). In order to keep the individual commitment to the home organization, the implementation and development of repatriation program is an important mean for retaining a strong pool of employees with valuable international experience (Gregersen, 1991), where clear and congruent organizational and individual career objectives ease the repatriation process (Black et al, 1992).

Providing repatriates with repatriation assistance could facilitate in forming accurate expectations, therefore decreasing the number of disappointments repatriate would likely face upon returning home and helping them with the readjustment (Black et al., 1999, 225). According to Black et al. (1992) it is critical for organization to manage and mold expatriates' expectations before they arrive home, so that the expatriates will be more likely to have their expectations fulfilled and more likely to adjust effectively to work and nonwork issues after coming home (Black et al., 1992, 248). Taking the time to understand what the employee expect and prefers in terms of his/her job back home,



and then trying to match a position to meet these expectations could be crucial for the organization. To be able to offer positions that would meet the repatriates expectation organizations' need to communicate with the expatriates during their assignment in order to compare the organization and the employees' development abroad. Companies need to ensure that they have the ability to changing organizational human resource demands and changing demands of the employee (Harvey, 1982, 58).

There are number of ways organization can facilitate repatriation including assigning sponsors, providing frequent home leaves, providing pre-return training and maintaining communication between expatriate and the home organization, particularly regarding the home country job environment and job placement (Black et al., 1999, 228). Assigning a sponsor or a mentor for the expatriate could help provide expatriates with information related to the home organization and the home country during the assignment (Black et al., 1999a, 226). A sponsor program should have some kind of clear set of objectives and rules for both the expatriate and the sponsor. Organizations can provide home organization related information to expatriates by offering them access to the organization's intranet and monthly newsletters (Klaff, 2002, 43). The mentor's job is to correspond regularly with the employee and meet with him/her periodically at home or on location to help the expatriate link with appropriate groups at home, especially after reorganization or downsizing (Shilling, 1993, 43). A good mentor can help when the employee returns by providing contacts, career advice and general support (Black, 1991). If the expatriate don't have a mentor during his/her assignment, it is still essential to assign one before the return in order to make the home coming process much more effective. Yurkiewicz and Rosen (1995) allege that providing a mentor helps reduce the "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" concern of many expatriates. Expatriate mentoring, an information-exchange relationship in which a mentor and an expatriate share information on the expatriate's career and development issues, is especially important when the expatriate is trying to adjust to the culture shock experienced when first entering the host organization and culture (Harvey et al, 1999). Expatriate mentoring may help the expatriate recognize the critical environmental cues and develop effective coping skills. It may also help the expatriate maintain a positive social image about the organization due to the help he/she has received during the foreign assignment.

Ideally, repatriates should be placed in jobs in which they can utilize the knowledge and skills they have acquired abroad and have similar level of autonomy to the job abroad

(Stroh et al., 1998, 122). In case it is impossible to place an expatriate to an ideal job, the situation should be communicated clearly and accurately to the expatriate in order to avoid disappointments and unnecessary gaps between expectations and reality (Stroh et al., 1998, 121). It would also be beneficial for the repatriate if the foreign assignment would have a flexible end-time as this may allow the expatriate time to look for an appropriate return job positions that may be limited at the fixed end-time (Allen & Alvarez, 1998, 36). Another way of maintaining close contact with the expatriate is through regular visit back home a couple of times a year (Solomon, 1995, 32). The longer the employees are overseas the more difficult their work adjustment will be upon returning. The trip back to the home country during the assignment will show clear picture about the expatriate's home country, and this visit may also provide vital information that would reduce the visiting repatriates' level of uncertainty and dilemma when he/she is finally called back to the home country. Bringing people back home on a short-term project or assignment before the actual return may reduced job-oriented repatriation problems (Solomon, 1995, 32). When expatriates spend some time in the domestic office, their faces become more familiar to the rest of the employees thus making the transition into their new role easier upon return (Solomon, 1995, 32).

Pre-return training and orientation can provide essential information about the entire repatriation process to the expatriates and their families. Expatriates need information about the changes that has taken place in their home country working place while they are working abroad. Expatriates should be informed about changes such as structural and political changes in the organization, new technology at the home base work place, living condition, compensation, educational system, value of the local currency and price level, etc. and other important changes that has taken place so that they would not be shock or surprise at the new changes upon their return. According to Tom (1992) prereturn training should also focus on such elements as lowered self-esteem due to a reduction in independence and responsibility, lost or diminished sense of focus or mission at work, and the general stress that any major changes may paced on a spouse and family (Black et al., 1992, 249-50; Black and Gregersen, 1991, 692). Providing customized repatriation-training programs to expatriates who return from global assignments individually (instead of in groups) is expensive and time-consuming. One way to overcome this problem is to provide video-based training (Black et al., 1992, 249-50). The purpose of repatriation training is to highlight the skills the employee has

gained, and to show how these skills can be used to benefit the company (Shilling, 1993, 46).

To further facilitate the repatriation adjustment the home organization can arrange a welcoming event in order to recognize and to show to the repatriate and their family that they are still part of the organization and that the organization still care about them. The organization should allow the repatriates to make brief statement during the welcoming event in order to share the foreign experience gained abroad during the assignment. Also, the home organization can organize a brief post-assignment interview with the repatriate and his spouse to explore their views about the assignment and to find out any repatriation issues (Solomon, 1995, 32). According to Andreason and Kinneer (2004) the home organization should assist in finding suitable housing and schools for the children as well as spouse assistance in finding a job (Andreason & Kinneer, 2004, 18). There are numerous factors affecting and influencing repatriation which can explain why and how repatriates have difficulties in adjusting back to the home organization and social environment (Feldman & Tompson, 1993).

## **2.9 EARLIER STUDIES ON REPATRIATION**

The studies on repatriate adjustment have been changing significantly during the last few years. While many of the earlier studies were descriptive and narrow in nature, more attention is now being paid to theoretical models that describe how, and why, repatriates have difficulties adjusting to new job assignments (Feldman, 1991). Earlier studies of repatriation state that key components of readjustment success are to reduce uncertainty and inaccurate expectations, and that these components are central for successful repatriation. By knowing what is acceptable behaviour in a country will reduce the uncertainty, but many repatriates seem to lack an up to date understanding of the home country when they return home, and hence their uncertainty on how to address certain issues increase. Furthermore, inaccurate expectations by the individuals about the international assignment and what it can offer, and the gap between the repatriates' expectations and the reality that is facing them when returning home have a significant impact on the repatriation's success or failure. Therefore, by limiting and being aware of the factors that increase uncertainty and inaccurate expectations will help

to ease the repatriation and determine the success of the assignment (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Yan et al, 2002; Linehan & Scullion, 2002).

Previous literature on repatriation states three adjustment elements affecting repatriates when returning back to the home country and these are; adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with home nationals, and adjustment to the general environment and culture. These studies also show that some factors may affect all elements of adjustment, while some factors only have an impact on one element (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Feldman & Thompson, 1993). Feldman & Thompson (1993) outlined in their study five major factors which are: 1. *Demographic variables* which consist of age and gender, 2. *International characteristics of the job change* which impact the repatriate if he is citizen of the country that he is returning to, 3. *Job characteristics variables* which influences the adjustment, 4. *Degree of differences between job assignments* where a higher degree of differences between role autonomy, co-workers and job duties generates more uncertainty and loss which may have an impact on the repatriates' work adjustment, and 5. *Coping strategies* which involves the way in which the repatriate himself/herself manage his/her re-entry into the home organization. Earlier studies on repatriation have focused mainly upon what the companies should do in order to achieve an effective repatriation as well as why companies need to view repatriation as an important area (Harvey, 1989; Tung, 1988).

In recent studies, Suutari and Välimaa (2002) outlined different factors (so called antecedent or anticipatory factors) that influence repatriation before the return to the home organization which they divided into individual factors, work and organizational factors, and non-work factors. According to Suutari and Välimaa (2002), this factors affects diverse element of repatriation in either a positive or negative ways. Also, Paik (2002) has investigated the earlier trends within repatriation involving updated numbers of employees that leave the organization and the cost associated with foreign assignments (Paik, 2002). In recent studies, new focus has come into existence which does not only reflect what a company or organization should do to create an effective repatriation; but also to create an effective repatriation where the expatriate themselves has to take initiatives into their own hand in order to experience a smooth repatriation. Despite all the earlier studies and theories developed within the area of repatriation, it still seem there is never going to be a specific theory that can be relied on for sufficient information that would lead to effective and satisfactory repatriation. This current study

will focus on repatriation at the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) which has no single trace of research data on repatriation despite its own shared burden with repatriation. The findings to this study will be presented in chapter 4.

## **2.10 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

Repatriation which is considered as the last step in the expatriation cycle is known to be the most challenging for the repatriates including the organization that sends their employees/expatriates to serve them abroad. The number of repatriation variables mention in this study has helped develop a rational for this current study where the differences between expatriation and repatriation is clearly exhibited. The experiences that repatriate's go through during readjustment resemble that of the W-curve and the U-curve shape. According to Torbjörn (1982) when the period of adjustment is extended to cover repatriation process, the adjustment curve will begins to resemble the W-curve shape as new curve may begin to form upon arrival back home.

Adler's (1981, 1991) model of coping with reentry addresses the coping mode or attitudes used to approach reentry. The repatriates' attitude which refers to active or passive could either be positive or negative depending on how he/she handle the overall repatriation adjustment. Repatriation deserves a much careful planning and comprehensive preparation that has to do with two-way communication between the expatriate and the organization that the employee/expatriate is representing abroad. Also, the repatriates themselves need to do more in order to ease the readjustment. Repatriates need to develop the habit of proactivity which means merely taking initiative into their own hand instead of complaining about the difficulties that repatriation has brought upon them and their families as they go through the adjustment.

### **3 RESEARCH METHOD**

This chapter will describe: (1) the choice of research approach and research method used in this study, (2) the case organization through brief introduction, (3) about the participants who participated in this current study including the way in which the data was collected for this study, and (4) the validity and reliability of this current study.

#### **3.1.1 Qualitative Method**

The research approach used in this study is qualitative single-case study approach which was carried out through a semi-structured interview method. There are principally two possible methodological approaches to choose between, the quantitative and the qualitative method. The choice of methodological approach is strongly dependent upon the information investigated, the problem, the purpose and finally the current research questions of the research (Holme & Solvang, 1997). The choice of method for this thesis was a qualitative method. Quantitative methods are based on statistical information and are often used to point out relationships between different variables (McDaniels and Gates, 2005). While quantitative methods are formalised, highly structured and characterised by a high level of control, qualitative methods are instead only to some extent formalised and therefore brings more flexibility (Holme & Solvang, 1997). Qualitative research refer to research about persons' lives, lived experiences, behaviors, and feeling (Strauss & Corbin, 1996). A qualitative method is sufficient when investigating standpoints and values among respondents (McDaniels & Gates, 2005).

Qualitative research is suitable for case study approach because it provides a deeper understanding about a specific subject in matter (Holme and Solvang, 1997). The word qualitative implies an emphasis and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency as seen in quantitative research. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Qualitative researchers seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 8). Qualitative methods are connected with words like exploration and discovery. When the researcher tries to make sense of a situation or a phenomena

without pre-determined expectations one can state that an inductive approach is used (Patton, 2002). It is said that a qualitative research generally is seen as inductive. However, some researchers argue that during the different stages of the research process both an inductive and a deductive approach can be implied (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

According to Patton (2002), induction can be explained as a “research then a theory” approach, while deduction on the other hand is a “theory then a research” approach. Moreover, through an inductive analysis patterns and associations derived from observations are found. A deductive analysis instead tests hypotheses theoretically through a logically derived process. An inductive approach initiates with an investigation of open questions rather than testing theoretically derived hypothesis, which is done in a deductive approach. The author of this thesis did not follow a clear inductive or deductive approach. Instead a combination of these approaches was applied. The goal was to allow the repatriates/employees’ who participate in this study to speak openly about how they had experienced the repatriation process. The author wants the interview to be authentic, and he did not want to influence the respondents’ answers with the existing theories that he has already written or presented before the interview. Nevertheless, since the theoretical study had been done before the empirical research the author of this thesis cannot claim that the research was done without any influence of the theories. Therefore, it can be stated that this is more a deductive than an inductive study. In all due circumstances, a qualitative approach was the natural and preferred choice of method for this research.

According to Yin (1989, 19) there are three criteria for selecting among various research strategies: 1) The type of research questions being asked, 2) The control an investigator has over actual behavioural events, and 3) Focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomenon. Yin (1994) stated that the type of research question is the most important condition when selecting research strategy. He further alleges that “how” and “why” questions are likely to favour the employment of experiments, histories, or case studies. Since the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of repatriation at (SLMFA) the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Sierra Leone, the research questions was formulated as “how” questions as seen in brackets (“How does SLMFA repatriates experience repatriation in Sierra Leone?”, and “How can SLMFA repatriates cope and prepare themselves for repatriation adjustment in Sierra Leone”) in order to reach a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. By adopting this type of research

questions, survey and archival analysis are ruled out, narrowing down the suitable research strategy alternatives suggested by Yin (1994) to experiments, histories, or case studies. When determining which of these three research strategies to use, the remaining two conditions – control over behavioural events and focus on contemporary events – serve as helpful guidelines. Single-case study was chosen over multiple-case study due to limited resources and due to the fact that this case study is unique in nature (Yin, 1989, 48-49).

### 3.1.2 Case Study

The idea of a case study is to focus on individual instances rather than a wide spectrum (Denscombe, 1998). The author of this thesis believes that by carrying-out a research on only one case rather than multiple cases would enable him to get a clear insight and understanding of the subject matter in this study. In case studies the focus lies on relationships and the processes that lead to the outcomes. The advantages for case study approach is that it generate the opportunity to not only find out what the outcomes are, but also why certain outcomes might take place (Denscombe, 1998). The reason for the choice of a case study was to explore the complexity that surrounds the repatriation process. To be able to examine the repatriation adjustment of the repatriates who has returned back to (SLMFA) the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the author need a dipper and clear insight about the experiences the repatriates went through when they returned back to Sierra Leone. A case study is therefore considered to be appropriate for this study.

Yin (1994) proposes five different research strategies: experiment, survey, archival analysis, history, and case study. Every form of study has its advantages as well as limitations, depending on what the researcher wants to investigate. The author of this paper chose a case study approach because it gives greater insight and understanding of the repatriation problem. The problem with repatriation is very complex; therefore, case study research seems both informative and appropriate for this study. In addition, case study does not only give the researcher the theoretical information that he needs, but also presents a good opportunity to understanding the process of repatriation at a specific public sector like SLMFA. Despite this gain, Yin (1994) describes three potential barriers when doing a case study approach. The most common problem with a case



study is that it lacks thorough research, meaning that the researcher has preconceived notions about the case and its problems, which may influence its results and outcomes. The second most common problem that occurs in case studies is that they are not broad enough and, therefore, they do not offer enough material in order to make scientific generalizations. The third and last problem concerning case studies is that they are very often too time-consuming to conduct (Yin, 1994). Despite this statement, the author of this thesis still believes that a case study approach will be the most appropriate for him to gain insight into the repatriation process. This approach allows the author of this thesis to maintain a holistic view while investigating real life events.

To meet the objective and aims of this study, the author needs a profound knowledge about the entire repatriation process. The author of this thesis believes that by looking at a single case organization like SLMFA the likelihood of receiving a greater insight into the problem of the repatriation process may increase further. Therefore, a single case approach is considered to be appropriate for a public sector organization like SLMFA. To come up with possible suggestions on how the organization can facilitate its repatriation process, one needs to first examine the existing repatriation process from the organization's perspective and thereafter analyse the situation facing the repatriates.

### 3.1.3 Choice of Case Organization

The Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) was chosen as the empirical base for this thesis because of its lengthy service in dealing with employees/expatriates who are sent abroad to work for SLMFA, and employees/repatriates who are returning back to SLMFA in Sierra Leone after a long service in a foreign country. SLMFA was established in 1961 after Sierra Leone gain its independence from Britain. When Sierra Leone became independent, the country established its own ministry of foreign affairs in order to handle external relations with foreign countries. It became Sierra Leone's government policy after independence that the State of Sierra Leone would be represented abroad exclusively by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs through its ambassadors and honorary consuls.

The reasons for the establishment of SLMFA and the sending out of diplomatic staff around the world was to demonstrate Sierra Leone's independence to the outside world,

and to forge strong diplomatic ties and cooperation with countries considered to be friendly to the Sierra Leonean government and its people. With the current SLMFA administration headed by Ms. Zainab H. Bangura, the ministry has experience increase number of its staff going abroad to work for SLMFA. Today SLMFA has 16 embassies and 9 consulates around the world with 200 staff. The current trend of diplomatic relation between Sierra Leone and other countries especially those in Asia and in Eastern Europe has lead to an increase number of SLMFA staff members from 200 to 258 who are currently working abroad some of whom are accompanied by their spouse and children.

According to one of the x ambassador who gave me some of the participants contact information - the reasons for sending out SLMFA's employees/expatriates to serve as embassy and consulate staff abroad is to: (1) expose its workforce to the international community, (2) enable its workforce to acquire vital knowledge and experience in international foreign affairs that could be brought back to Sierra Leone by the expatriates themselves after their international service has ended, (3) help forge strong and friendly diplomatic relationship between the Sierra Leonean government and the government of the foreign country where the expatriate or diplomatic staffs are stationed, and (4) prepare employees with potential leadership skills to lead should any sudden changes or vital vacant position exist within SLMFA's domestic and international operation.

Every SLMFA staff accepts the international assignment whenever it is given to them. According to most of the participants it is an opportunity that nobody wants to miss. All the staff cherished and embraced expatriation because it introduces them to a new world adventure and experience that has never been felt before when compared to the knowledge that they already possessed about their own original world in Sierra Leone. The interviewees who participated in this study came up with various reasons for accepting the international assignment offered by SLMFA. The participant's stressed the reasons why they are always eager to accept international assignment is because the acceptance: gives them advantage for possible promotion and changes in life-style, open doors of opportunities, gives them high self-esteem and makes them look smart in the eyes of colleagues, neighbours, and family members at home, and it enable them to have higher wages during the overseas assignment. Furthermore, the acceptance also make their individual credential or résumé look good for top vacant positions that they might be interested in at home or abroad as they continue to work for SLMFA. For some SLMFA

employees expatriation could also mean career advancement; especially for those SLMFA staff who have strong affiliation with top officials in the Sierra Leone government.

### 3.2 Participants introduction and description

The amount of participants in the study was nine as the nature of the study necessitates a comprehensive study of a small sample (Dukes, 1984). The criteria for selecting these nine participants is that they should be employees' of SLMFA who have worked overseas for over six years and have been repatriated to Sierra Leone within a period of one and a half year only. This group of SLMFA participants were targeted because they had been on foreign assignment abroad for over six years, and then returned back to their home country and stayed there for the first one and a half year period which allows a degree of sufficient information about the way in which the repatriation adjustment affects their lives. According to Black & Gregersen (1991, 1999b) the first year after repatriation appears to be the time frame when the readjustment occurs.

The selection of the nine participants was made possible through the author's contact with two former Sierra Leonean ambassadors in China and Belgium. Both former ambassadors are presently residing in Sierra Leone including a family member who introduced the author of this thesis to the ex ambassadors. The reason for contacting the two former ambassadors is because they still have very good contact with many of the SLMFA staff; some of whom are preparing to go abroad to work for SLMFA, and others who have already returned to Sierra Leone. The author of this thesis contacted the nine participants after receiving their contact information from the two ex-ambassadors through telephone in late October of 2007. The author's reason for contacting the participants was to introduce himself to the participants for the pending interviews, and also to get familiar with them. After the potential interviewees had indicated interest in participating in this current study, a letter including an interview guide was e-mailed to each participant prior to the interview for the purpose of gathering data that may offer insight about their repatriation experience after the overseas assignment. The questionnaire which identified key themes for this current study was used to help guide the interview. The questionnaire was useful in that it allowed the participants to consider repatriation as it affects each aspect of their lives, and also helped them look at some parts of the repatriation process that had not been given much, if any consideration.

Authentic description of the participants who participated in this study may risk compromising the anonymity of the repatriates who has taken part in this study. Also, authentic description of the participants who took part in this current study may likely lead to grave consequences or setback to the current SLMFA job that they now occupy at this moment in time. Due to this incentive the author of this thesis and the nine participants come to the conclusion that pseudonym a trans-national tradition and concept that is utilized by most of the world's well known novelists, poets, essayists and journalists be used to describe them instead of using their authentic description. Pseudonyms for the six *Male* participants/repatriates are: Amara, Amadu, Brima, Conton, Santigi, and Lamina, and the three *Female* participants/repatriates are: Adama, Isatu, and Memunatu. All the participants are Sierra Leonean whose age range from 37 to 56 years old, and the length of time they have worked overseas as expatriates was 6 to 14 years. Two of the male participants who are now in their mid fifties have been sent twice abroad to work for SLMFA. The length of period to work abroad for SLMFA is usually seven years, and expatriates who has strong political affiliation with the government that is in power in Sierra Leone usually have their seven years period extended further especially if they are in good term with top ranking members in the government of Sierra Leone. All the participants had repatriated to Sierra Leone within a period of a year and a half, and they have stayed and worked in Belgium, China, UK, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, and the United States. Three of the male repatriates including one female repatriates were accompanied by their spouse and children whose ages range from two and a half year to four years old.

The participants were all keen to tell their story, and one of them stated that it is a step forward because no single person in Sierra Leone has ever approached them to ask them about the ways in which they have experienced repatriation in Sierra Leone. Some of the participants stress that the 45-50 minutes that has been allocated to each of them was not sufficient to tell their own side about repatriation. Such gestures from some of the participants demonstrated to the author how eager some of them have become to tell their experience about repatriation. As far as the interview for this current thesis is concerned, the author's goal and object was to stick to the time frame that he has set aside for the interview questions, and not to go further beyond due to the cost involved to make a phone call from Finland to Sierra Leone. Also, the author was very concerned that lengthy interview conversation with some of the participants may shift focus on the essential themes that was to be discover from the interviews.

### 3.3 Collection of data

In order to collect the primary data for this current study, the author conducted nine separate individual telephone interviews with the participants. In this study, semi-structured in-depth interviews which are open-ended in nature were the author's preferred choice to collect his data. Case study interviews are of an open-ended nature in which you can ask the key respondents for the facts of a matter as well as for the respondents' opinion about the events (Yin, 1994). The purpose of an in-depth interview is to understand the experience of those who are interviewed, not to predict or to control what the participants has gone through or experienced. In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes (Kvale, 1996).

The researcher's task is to present the experience of the people he or she interviews in compelling enough detail and in sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted, and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects (Seidman, 1998). According to Yin (1994) interview is one of the most important sources of case study information. Further, Holme and Solvang (1991) argue that interviews are ideal when in-depth information is preferred and that it allows flexibility and closeness to the respondents, which is vital when undertaking qualitative studies. Interview is a two-way conversation that allowed the interviewer to actively participate in the interview (Yin, 1994). Interviews have been the primary source for receiving information about the way in which repatriation affects the participants who participate in this current study. Yin (1994) describes the advantages of an interview as targeted and insightful. It is targeted due to the fact that it focuses directly on the case study topic. Moreover, it is insightful because it provides perceived casual inferences. According to Saunders and Thornhill (2003), there are two ways of collecting data, either by primary data where the data collected is new and specially assembled for that purpose, and/or by secondary data where the data is collected by someone else. Yin (2003) stated that the primary and secondary data can be divided into six different types: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. Each of these have general advantages and disadvantages, however, none of them encompasses a complete advantage over the other. On the contrary, they act as a high complement to each other (Yin, 1994, 2003).

According to Yin (1994) interviews can be based on three different strategies: 1) open-ended interviews, 2) focused interview, and 3) a structured interview following a line of a formal survey. The open-ended interviews are the most often used in case study research because they allow the respondent to provide facts and individual opinion about the way in which they have experienced certain occurrence in their lives. The open-ended interviews consume time and through this method the interviewer may be able to guide the respondent through an outline of predetermined areas of discussion during the interview. In a focused interview situation, the respondent is interviewed for a shorter period of time, and the interview is more likely to follow a set of outlined questions even though it may still be an open-ended interview in nature due to the fact that it has been conducted in a conversational manner. The third and last type of interview is the structured interview which follows a strict set of predetermined questions with a formal survey. A semi-structured in-depth interview, which is open-ended in nature, was the preferred choice of data collection for this study. An open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants (Seidman, 1998, 69). There are at least two types of open-ended questions especially relevant to in-depth interviewing. One is what Spradley (1979) called the “grand tour” question (pp. 86-87), in which the interviewer asks the participant to reconstruct a significant segment of an experience. And the second type of open-ended question focuses more on the subjective experience of the participant than on the external structure (Seidman, 1998, 69-70). The first type which is open-ended, and classified by Spradley (1979) as “grand tour” allows the participant to reconstruct his/her experience, was seen as appropriate for this current study. The interviews in this study followed an in-depth interview approach with the research questions serving as a guide during the telephone interviewing. The interview guide serves as the author’s checklist in order to make sure that no important data is left out during the interviews. All information related to this current study was e-mailed to the respondents in advance to help them prepare for the interviews. The reasons for this, was to give the participants time to think so that the author may acquire broad and detail information about the way in which the repatriation process has impacted the respondents’ lives.

Because of the geographical distance between the author and the respondents including the costs involved - the author was unable to perform a face-to-face interview with the nine participants. As a result, the author’s only option was to conduct nine separate telephone interviews with the six male and three female who opted to take part in this

current study in October of 2007. There was an interval of two week recess after each interview for this current study. Doing so gives unity to each interview knowing that interview has at least a chronological beginning, middle, and end (Seidman, 1998). Interviewers can learn to hone their skills if they work within a set amount of time and have to fit their technique to it. Furthermore, if interviewers are dealing with a considerable number of participants, they need to schedule their interviews so that they can finish one and go on to the next (Seidman, 1998). According to Seidman (1998), as interviewers begins to work with the vast amount of material that is generated in in-depth interviews, they will appreciate having allotted a limited amount of time to each.

Telephone interviewing is less costly and time consuming. According to Saunders and Thornhill (2003) the important thing when interviewing over the telephone is that it gives one the ability to control the pace of the interview and it enables one to record any sufficient data that is mentioned during the interview. Before the starting of the interviews each of the nine participants were contacted through e-mails and telephone in order for the author to get acquainted with the respondents.

The interviews were conducted in English which is the official spoken language in Sierra Leone. The interviews lasted for about 45-50 minutes. The nine participants were all cooperative which made it easier for the author to carry out his interviews successfully. To acquire a much effective and clear-cut interpretation of the interviews, the author of this thesis put into practice Yin's (2003) suggestion of using a tape recorder. In addition to the tape recorder, notes were also taken during the interviews, and after every interview the author wasted no time to carefully analyze the pile of notes that he had written down during the interviews. According to Vygotsky (1987) the most reliable way to work with spoken words is that of the ability of the researcher to be able to transform spoken words into a written text. The primary method of creating text from interviews is to tape-record the interviews and to transcribe them. Each word a participant speak reflects his or her consciousness (Vygotsky, 1987). Tape-recording offers other benefits as well. By preserving the words of the participants, researchers have their original data. If something is not clear in a transcript, the researchers can return to the source and check for accuracy (Seidman, 1998). By studying tapes of conversations, you are able to focus on the "actual details" of one aspect of social life (Sacks, 1992b).

The strength of interviews lies in one's ability to obtain a large amount of data quickly. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), interviews allow for immediate follow-up questions and if necessary, clarifications. Combined with observation, interviews allow the researcher to check description against fact. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989) interview has its own various weaknesses as well. Participants may hesitate to share all the information needed with the interviewer. Also, the interviewer may not ask appropriate questions due to lack of experience and knowledge. In addition, answers to the questions may not be correctly interpreted by the interviewer or participants may not be truthful (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 83). Moreover, a good interviewer requires considerable amount of training in interview techniques and must have a good listening skills (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 63). Interviews must also pay close attention to the concern surrounding data quality. If interviews are used alone, interviewers' personal biases may affect the analysis and the interpretation of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, 83). Interviewing can also be time consuming and costly, and the transcription takes a lot of time. Although large amounts of data can be collected, analyzing these data can be difficult (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p. 64).

### 3.3.1 Data Analysis

The purpose of the data analysis was to obtain a valid and common understanding of the transcriptions (Kvale, 1996) and to find the invariant structures of the experience of repatriation (Dukes, 1984). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), the researchers' intention when analyzing qualitative data from interviews is to make sense of the words collected. They further state that the analysis can be divided into three sequential stages; data reduction, data display, and conclusions drawing/verifications. During the data reduction stage the researcher selects, focuses, simplifies, abstracts, and transforms the data, with the purpose of organizing it so that the final conclusions can be drawn and verified. This is followed up in the data display stage by the author of this thesis who took the reduced data and displays it in an organized and clear way in order to draw conclusions more easily.

Yin (2003b), state that analysis could be done with support from three general strategies; *Relying on theoretical propositions* – which means researchers should analyse the empirical data with a theoretical base, *Thinking about rival explanations* – which means



that a researcher should consider possible critics when analysing empirical data, and also *Developing a case description* – which means that researchers should have plan when analysing empirical findings. In order to conduct this current study the authors of this thesis relied on *theoretical propositions* where the researcher analysed the empirical data with a theoretical base. The theoretical proposition guides the case study analysis and helps focus attention on certain data that are relevant for this study and ignore those data that are not relevant for this current study. According to Yin (1994) the best preparation for conducting case study analysis is to have a general analytic strategy such as the one relying on the theoretical propositions and the other beginning with a descriptive approach to the case. This current study involves the analysis of interview data from tape recorder and written notes that the author had prepared after each separate individual interview with the nine participants that took part in this study. The following section below will elaborate on issues related to trustworthiness in this current thesis.

### 3.3.2 Validity and Reliability

There are a number of ways to establish credibility during the process of data analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend the techniques of member checks, prolonged engagement, triangulation, and debriefing which the author applied in this thesis.

*Member checks* are out of the context of this study because of the distance between the researcher and the participants. However, the author of this current study provide each participants a copy of the interview questions that was prepared for this current study, and then make further check for clarification and verification of accuracy after every individual interviews.

*Prolonged engagement* refers to the sufficient time spent to engage with issues related to the data in order to develop a significant appreciation of the phenomenon. The days and months that the author has devoted to the study of repatriation through the aid of literatures that chronicle the burden of repatriation, vital repatriation articles and handouts from the author's supervisor, academic journals, the authentic feeling and experience of repatriation presented to the author himself by the participants who took part in this current study, the countless number of times, days and months spent

writing and analysing the data for this study has all increased the author's knowledge about the repatriation process and experiences.

*Triangulation* involves the use of multiple data sources that allows for confirmation or disconfirmation of possible themes or meanings. This current research involves a single case study in which nine separate interviews were carried out through telephone with the aid of a portable tape recorder. The use of tape recorder during the interviews enables the author of this current thesis to review and listen to what he has recorded in order to make sure that the data is consistent and reflects the consciousness of those who participated in this study. Each data collected from the nine interviews was recorded and then transcribed to require the needed data for this current study. According to Vygotsky (1987) to work most reliably with the words of participants, the researcher has to transform those spoken words into a written text to study. Each word a participant speaks reflects his or her consciousness. Furthermore, the author's own personal experience with repatriation and the knowledge he has acquired from literatures and journals that he has read to write this thesis has all helped to confirm the data for this current study.

*Debriefing* refers to consultations with others in regards to the research process. The author's debriefing was made possible through the aid of his own personal diary where he expresses his own thoughts and opinion about each of the interviews that he has done. Furthermore, the author was involved in constant consultation with the repatriates who participated in this study including the author's thesis supervisor during this study. All the above mentioned enables the author to meet the objectives that was set to carry out the research for this current study. According to methodological theories trustworthiness is often said to depend on the two variables; reliability and validity. High reliability means that the next researcher with the exact same prerequisites, following the identical procedures as described, should receive the same findings and conclusions as the previous researcher. Validity instead is created when the research is done correctly; meaning that what is actually aimed at in the investigation is examined (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1999). In a qualitative study the validity is superior to the reliability. The focus of a qualitative study should be to achieve as relevant and reliable information as possible, rather than trying to achieve the same result from time to time (Holme & Solvang, 1997). Accordingly, this statement has also worked as a general guideline throughout the entire working process of this thesis.

The author of this thesis stated clearly to the participants that the goal of reliability in this study is to minimize the risk of errors and biases in this current study. The author gave each participant his/her own copy of the interview guide including the author's supervisor who also receive a copy of the interview guide, and then explained to the supervisor and the participants in detail about the way in which the research is going to be implemented. The reason for the interview guide was to indicate the topic area of research to the participants and the author's thesis supervisor about the interview which detailed a sequence of carefully worded questions. The interview guide (see *Appendix 2*) was followed throughout the interview with the aid of a tape recorder which the author was able to double-check in order to avoid misinterpretation of the data that has been collected for this current study. *Appendix 2* shows how the research questions were conceptualized and arranged. In addition to this, written notes were also taken during the nine interviews and then further checked in order to make sure that the data meets the required objective that has been set for this current study.

To increase the validity, three tactics are available. Either the researcher can use multiple sources of evidence, establish a chain of evidence during the data collection, and/or let the key informant's review a draft of the case study report (Yin, 2003). The validity of this thesis is attributed to the question guide that was put together by the author for this thesis, and the words that the participants use in telling their own experience through a tape recorder during the interviews. All the interviews were done in English language because it is the official spoken language in Sierra Leone.

To comprehend the repatriation experience, the repatriation strategies used to cope, and the way in which repatriates should prepared themselves for repatriation, the author of this thesis has used and relied on number of information and sources which include his own personal experience with repatriation, his review of literatures and journals that continues to chronicled the anguish of repatriation, the questionnaire that he has prepared for the participants, and his qualitative research methodology which enable him to interact with the nine participants on one-to-one bases during the interviews. All the interviews for this current thesis were transcribed and carefully studied for possible themes of meaning. In order to establish credibility for the analysis and interpretations to this thesis the author of this thesis had engaged in prolonged engagement, triangulation, and debriefing (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985).

## 4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This chapter will elaborate on the outcome of the interviews that were carried out with the SLMFA repatriates. This chapter will describe themes related to work adjustment, adjustment to lifestyle, psychological adjustment, and coping strategies. Furthermore, issues related to support from the organization that dispatch the expatriates will be discussed. Finally, this chapter will end with the conclusion, including the implication and ideas for future research. To start with, the author of this current thesis will first of all reiterate the questions that this thesis is attempting to answer which are: (1) What was SLMFA staff experiences with repatriation?, (2) What strategies did SLMFA staff adopt to cope with repatriation?, and (3) What assistance do SLMFA offer its staffs for repatriation?.

In the following section Santegi and Adama explain their reason for accepting the international assignment.

*It is something that is enviable in our ministry, that is why one waists no time to take the offer after the application has been processed by top officials in our ministry. Many good things happen when I leave this place for a while, and the advantages are enormous. It brings so many changes in ones life, and the acceptance also exposes one to a wider picture of how people leave their lives in other part of the world (Santegi).*

*For me it was a dream come true to leave and work abroad, meet different people, experience different culture and acquire new skills and knowledge that set one apart from others in our ministry. I waisted no time to grab my acceptance letter when I find out it was positive. It is one of the best feelings one could ever imagine in our foreign ministry with the exception of the promotions that comes out once in a while for some of us (Adama).*

From the individual interviews it was easy to see how enthusiastic some of the interviewees were when they have the possibility to serve SLMFA abroad. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they would like to go and work again for SLMFA abroad but in a different country than the ones that they have already been to. It seems that some of the repatriates were more interested in serving SLMFA abroad than serving at the headquarters in Sierra Leone. One of the repatriates stressed that it was all a 'joyful mood' when he was serving SLMFA abroad, and upon returning to SLMFA's headquarter

in Sierra Leone his 'joyful mood' turn to a 'stressful mood' coupled up with bewilderment and constant fatigue which he had never experienced during his long international service abroad. These assertions by one of the interviewees also exhibit the difficulties repatriates go through after they have returned back to their home country and their home organization after a lengthy international service abroad.

#### **4.1 Pre-Return Repatriation Adjustment**

In this section, themes related to the repatriates' communication with the home organization, mentor, home country visit, and pre-return training will be discussed in order to shed light on some of the experiences expressed by the repatriates.

##### **4.1.1 Communication with the home organization**

From the current study the contrast were vivid about the ways in which the participants have experienced communication with the home organization while they were staying abroad. While four of the participants affirmed that they had pretty good communication with the home organization, the rest iterated that communication with the home organization was not that good. The individual interviews show that those few repatriates who were in better position during the foreign assignment were able to communicate much better with the home organization than the rest of the repatriates who were considered as junior staff during the international assignment. Repatriates who were in better or high position during the overseas assignment had regular contact with the home organization, and the network between them and the home organization was well maintained. This makes it less difficult for some of them to adjust to the home country working place as opposed to majority of the expatriates who were considered junior staff during the foreign assignment.

These discrepancies enable expatriates in high position to have direct contact with the home organization during the international assignment. Through the individual interviews it became apparent that expatriates in higher positions during the overseas assignment were well informed about issues concerning SLMFA and therefore perceived their level of communication much more positive as compared to the rest of the respondents. Low-ranking expatriates perceived communication to be less effective with

the home organization, and some of them even expressed that they did not have any form of communication with the home organization due to the kind of status they have during the international assignment. In the following section Brima, Isatu, Santegie, and Adama share some negative experience with issues related to communication.

*I sometimes felt out of sight during my international assignment - and as far as communication with SLMFA is concerned I was like a toddler waiting to be feed by his mom or dad. We junior expatriates relied heavily on only few of our senior expatriate staff for any latest information or communication between our embassy and SLMFA in Sierra Leone. I think there was too much bureaucracy or red tape involved in the way we receive information from SLMFA during the international assignment (Brima).*

*The longer my overseas assignment, the less I was able to communicate with SLMFA at home. This situation ruined my personal network at home and I was really upset to see how narrow my network has become when I returned back to Sierra Leone. It was somehow difficult to start all over again especially with those new people who have joined the organization at home while I was away (Isatu).*

*The organization at home doesn't see me as someone important during the overseas posting and that is why I have no motivation to communicate with anyone over their - the only people that SLMFA HR managers cares for during our service abroad are the bigger ones or senior staff who communicate regularly with them, I mean the bigger ones who makes all the decisions concerning the embassy where I was working abroad (Santegie).*

*The red tape situation is so chronic at SLMFA and it kills my motivation to communicate with every HR manager at our head office during my assignment abroad. Whenever I tried to make contact and ask for some assistance from our HR managers at home they will instead refer me to someone else that does not have anything to do with issues concerning SLMFA expatriates (Adama).*

Lack of sufficient communication between some of the participants and SLMFA during the overseas assignment has often led to frustration and dissatisfaction amongst most of the participants who took part in this study. From the individual interviews it appears that only four of the participants were able to experience communication in full with the home organization during the international assignment. The rest of the respondents stated that the only meaningful communication that they have during the foreign assignment were those communications with family members and friends which they considered as helpful and vital because of the current news they entailed about Sierra Leone during the overseas assignment. The rest of the respondents perceived communication with their family members and friends at home much more refreshing

and rewarding including other source of information about Sierra Leone that they usually access from the internet.

While Brima, Isatu, Santegie, and Adama were unable to establish good communication with the home organization on a day-to-day basis during the overseas assignment, few such as Amadu and Memunatu were able to establish effective communicate with the home organization. In the following section are positive communication experience shared by Amadu and Memunatu.

*Communication between me and SLMFA was never a problem during my overseas assignment. The line of communication between me and SLMFA was always open which makes it much easier for me to communicate during my assignment abroad. Also, my personal status during the foreign assignment enables me to communicate on a regularly basis with officials at the home organization, and I was well informed about current issues at home (Amadu).*

*I received lots of information about the home organization during my service abroad especially those information that concerned the branch that I was attached to before I left for the overseas assignment. During my service abroad I had good communication with many of the HR managers in our organization including my friends. Because of this reason my repatriation adjustment becomes less stressful than expected (Memunatu).*

From the individual interviews, it was obvious that while few of the respondents manage to communicate very well with the home organization, the majority did not experience any significant form of communication with the home organization during the international assignment. The interviews also show that few of the respondents did not even have any form of contact with the home organization in Sierra Leone. Lots of discursions concerning the roles of SLMFA HRM department came up during the interviews, and some of the participants mention that they tried very hard to establish communication with the home organization but did not succeed because of the embedded bureaucratic system that existed in SLMFA head office in Sierra Leone. Repatriates need to be proactive about issues concerning communication with the home organization despite the difficulties they are experiencing during the international assignment, and they should make concerted effort to make sure that communication run smoothly between them the expatriates themselves and the organization/SLMFA that sent them abroad.

#### 4.1.2 Mentor

Organizational sponsor or mentor assists the returning expatriates so that they may be able to adjust and communicate effectively with people at home during the early stage of the repatriation adjustment. According to Black et al. (1992) a mentor can provide the expatriate with important information about structural changes, strategic shifts, political coups at work, promotion opportunities, and general job-related and company-related knowledge. During the interviews, the respondents were asked if they had any contact person or mentor at SLMFA during the overseas assignment – and all of them stated that no contact person or sponsor was assigned to them to help with the return during the international assignment. From the interviews it was evident that most of the participants would have cherished the idea of having a mentor at the home organization. Some of the respondents even stressed that the idea of having a mentor might have helped them handle the repatriation adjustment much better in Sierra Leone, and could have made a difference in some ways should they have a contact person or mentor at the home organization. Below are experience shared by Conton and Adama in regards to mentor.

*As far as SLMFA is concerned a man's best mentor is himself or herself because the HR managers at SLMFA just don't understand the meaning of mentoring when it comes to repatriation issues (Conton).*

*When I was about to leave for the overseas assignment, five of my working place colleagues joined me and my family at our home for some kind of send off party. It was very good feeling and very good atmosphere that evening - but when we returned back, none of my colleagues showed up or came to receive me and my family at the Lungi airport in Freetown/Sierra Leone. I guess my colleagues do not care anymore about me, or they are not enthusiastic about my return as they have shown during my departure from Sierra Leone. Mentoring was something that I never think about because the HR managers at SLMFA don't care about this sort of things. One has to take initiative into their own hand instead of relying on managers at home who have their own personal problems to take care of (Adama).*

The repatriates were not generally pleased with the way mentoring has been handled by SLMFA HR managers. Some of the respondent stressed the lack of experience on the side of SLMFA HR managers in issues related to international assignment should be of grave concern for the organization if it wants to boost the effectiveness of its repatriation process.



#### 4.1.3 Home country visits

Some of the respondents stressed that they usually pay visit to Sierra Leone once in a year in order to be updated about up coming events at SLMFA, meeting with family members and friends, and also use the vacation as a kind of preparation for the final return to Sierra Leone. The respondents stressed that their visit to Sierra Leone usually occur in April or in December because of the good weather and the festivities that took place in Sierra Leone during these months. The respondents were asked about the cost involved for their trip to Sierra Leone, and if they receive any financial aid from SLMFA for their vacation to Sierra Leone. All the respondents stated that the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs offer them leave allowance once in a year which enables them to make a monthly or weekly visit to Sierra Leone either individually or together with their spouse and children. Through the interviews it was clear that expatriates with spouse and children receive much higher holiday allowance than expatriates who were single.

The interviews also show that three of the repatriates chose not to spend their monthly vacation in Sierra Leone but in the country where they were stationed abroad. One of the three repatriate who was working in the US, stated that his core reason for not spending his vacation in Sierra Leone was to save money to buy a house in Sierra Leone. This will help to make his repatriation adjustment much easier. The other two repatriates stressed that they were not too keen about visiting Sierra Leone during their vacation because of the strong and vibrant Sierra Leonean community that already existed in the foreign countries where they were stationed. In relation to the home coming visit the following comments were made by Amara and Memunatu.

*I always prefer spending my vacation in the US during my overseas assignment. Coming home to Sierra Leone to spend my vacation was always considered as problem because all the cash that I have saved while working abroad will finish in a day or two due to request from my sisters and brothers, extended family members, and friends who are desperately in need of financial aid at home. By spending all my vacation in the US during the assignment I was able to save more money for my repatriation plan which I could not do if I was visiting Sierra Leone every now and then (Amara).*

However, this current study shows that majority of the respondents consider home visit to be vital even though few of them chose not to visit Sierra Leone during their annual vacation.

*The home visit was absolutely necessary for me because it enables me to keep in touch with my family members and friends, maintain my network at my working place, and the visit also prepared me to have a sense of what the actual return would be like (Memunatu).*

Some of the repatriates stressed that the monthly and sometimes weekly visit that they made to Sierra Leone enables them to envision their home coming and prepare them for the final return. Further, the repatriates stressed that the visit also helps them to reduce the level of reverse culture shock that other ‘*jar*’ or ‘*just arrived repatriates*’ experienced in Sierra Leone due to their long absence from Sierra Leone.

#### 4.1.4 Pre-return training

Pre-return training concerning difficulties faced by the repatriate and his or her family will reduce uncertainty and thereby ease the repatriation adjustment (Gregersen et al, 1997). None of the repatriates for this current study received any form of training prior to their return back to Sierra Leone. From the interviews it became clear that SLMFA did not offer any pre-return training for the returning repatriates. However, the respondents expressed different opinions concerning the issue with pre-return training. Three repatriates expressed that they might have shown some interest should SLMFA had a pre-return training for its returning repatriates, while the remaining six respondents stressed that they do not consider pre-return training as something important for the adjustment process as it is considered their home country.

One among the six respondents stated that vital issues that need attention during repatriation are those related to finding a school for their children, a good house to stay in, and enough cash to sustain the life style that they were accustomed to during the overseas assignment as they try to cope with life in Sierra Leone. Many of the repatriates stated that more needs to be done by SLMFA in terms of a well drafted repatriation guide that will enable the repatriates to get a clear picture about the entire repatriation process that exist in the organization.

## 4.2 Work adjustment

### 4.2.1 Post-Return Adjustment

Repatriation adjustment continues to be a challenge for many organizations today, and work adjustment is considered to be one of the most relevant subject matter because of the participant's expectations about their home country working place. There were host of issues surrounding the repatriation adjustment of the nine participants who took part in this current study. Below are experience shared by Santegie and Isatu in relation to their adjustment at their working place after the return.

*What I found most difficult during the adjustment at my working place was working with some of the new staff that has been employed during my overseas assignment. I notice that most of the new staffs were young, educated, and very ambitious people. I find it extremely difficult to communicate with them as I tried to adjust to the new environment at my working place and this is something that bothers me a lot. The other thing that I find frustrating here is the less choice that I have in my present job position. During my service abroad I was able to choose between jobs that I wanted to do in our office, and here it is just impossible to do that now (Santegie).*

*As far as I am concerned, my current job is just the same with only slight differences. When I was working abroad I was heavily involved with immigration issues where I often see people with different cultural background coming to our office for visa and business related issues including Sierra Leoneans who need help with visa and passports for their foreign spouse and the children they have given birth to while staying abroad. Abroad I was feeling cold most of the time and I put on jackets, and here at home there is no need for those jackets I have been using – I only put on light dresses to go to work and to go about my businesses. To be sincere, there is not much difference with the administrative job that I am doing now and the one that I was doing abroad (Isatu).*

This current study shows that only half of the participants were unaware about the exact job position that awaits them at SLMFA prior to their return. Upon returning to the home organization, three of the repatriates continue to do the same jobs that they were doing before the overseas assignments, and the other two repatriates continue with a new IT (Information Technology) related job that has been establish by SLMFA. The four repatriates who did not have any idea about their job placement prior to the return were placed in temporary and dissimilar positions when compared to the position that they once held before the overseas assignment. The four repatriates stressed the reason for the temporary position was because they fail to comply to certain conditions that has to

do with documentation that SLMFA usually sent to its expatriates in order to let them know that their time is up, and it is time for them to return back to the home organization in Sierra Leone. This study shows that repatriates who know their job position prior to returning to the home organization were much more pleased with their job position because of the similarities between their present job at SLMFA and the job that they were doing abroad. The results show that repatriates who are pleased with their jobs had more positive experiences about their work as compared to the other repatriates who find themselves in position at the home organization doing jobs that were not similar to their overseas. While Isatu and the others showed some satisfaction about their job in Sierra Leone, the other repatriates especially those who were placed in temporary position were not so happy about the job that they have been offered.

Much of the frustration expressed by some of the repatriates was due to the fact that they were too focused on generalizing how specialized they have become during the expatriation assignments instead of focusing on the current job situations that they now find themselves in as repatriates in Sierra Leone.

#### 4.2.2 Utilization of job skills

Among the participants for this current study, only two repatriates expressed that their international experience, especially in the area of IT (Information Technology) visa processing methods, was valued and effectively put into use at the home organization. Some participants stressed that the knowledge and experience that they have acquired during the international assignment, even though valuable, is still dormant and was never put into use at the home organization. According to Black et al. (1999a, 217) less than half of repatriates are able to utilize their knowledge upon returning to their home organization. In relation to utilization of job skills at SLMFA it was evident in the interviews that only few of the repatriates were able to utilize the skills that they have acquired during their international service. Below Lamina share his experience in utilizing his job skills.

*My skills and knowledge are vital for my working place and I am delighted to see the foreign ministry at home taking advantage of it all. What helps me most to secure a better job upon return to the home organization was the evening courses that I took in IT related field during my overseas assignment including other courses in the area of*

*international foreign affairs. After my working hours I will stroll to one of the institute that was closer to our office in Belgium to partake in courses that involves IT and international foreign relations. Upgrading my skills and knowledge in one of those institute after my regular working hours has paid off tremendously because the evening class helps me acquired skills that SLMFA desperately need at this moment in time without me noticing it. I think I am doing fine at SLMFA (Lamina).*

It seem only two of the repatriates were able to utilize the knowledge and skill that they have acquired abroad upon returning to SLMFA the home organization in Sierra Leone. Among the two repatriates, one stressed that the acceptance of his skills and knowledge by senior staff at SLMFA positively impacted the way he was able to handle the adjustment at his working place. He stressed that senior staffs at SLMFA have high esteem of him, and at the moment he consider himself indispensable at his workplace because of the major roll he is playing in the organization. The other repatriate stressed that despite her positive experience with her job, she still thinks that there were more negative repatriation experiences than positive ones as far as her notion is concerned.

It was evident from the interviews that the two repatriates were much more satisfied with the current positions that they occupy at the home organization and they did not sound as frustrated as some of the other repatriates who were unable to put their knowledge and skills into practice at the home organization upon return. In regards to this section, it seems that the adjustment to job upon return varied from one participant to another. Also, this study revealed that repatriates can also acquire new skills and knowledge out from the job and not only in the job that the foreign ministry has sent them to do abroad.

#### 4.2.3 Professional Status loss

The interviews show that most of the repatriates have in one way or another experienced drastic decline in their status in Sierra Leone, especially those repatriates who were in top position during the international assignment. The most common forms of losses experienced by most of the repatriates involved changes from high scale salary to low scale salary for the repatriates at the home organization, changes from managerial position during the overseas assignment to non managerial position after repatriation, changes in repatriates job (i.e. repatriates doing jobs at the home organization where they could not used or put in practice the overseas knowledge and skills that they have

acquired abroad), high ranking promotions awarded to immigration officers at the home organization that were once considered as junior staff by the returning repatriates, frustration for not being promoted during the international assignments, and changes in the overall working environment at the home organization. Amadu and Conton shared their experience about their professional status loss during the individual interviews.

*In the UK I was in a management position where I always have the final say concerning decisions that were made, and here it is someone else who is in charge and who has the final say. Staffs who were working under me usually attend meetings that I used to organize at the embassy – and here it is someone else - I have to go and listen to what they are saying this time. Life goes up and down, my life was up during the overseas assignment and now my life is down again at home. But anyhow, I am pleased with the job that I have upon returning to SLMFA (Amadu).*

*I still could not believe that all the skills and knowledge that I have acquired during my time abroad has become dormant, wasted, and going down the drain here. I feel frustrated most of the time to work with people who could not listen to me and do not have any experience when it comes to issues concerning international affairs. Those people are too narrow minded, and some of them are very difficult to work with (Conton).*

It could be seen from the above statements that professional status loss was also felt in different ways by the participants. Amadu stressed that he could no longer play the management roll at SLMFA that he was conversant with during the international assignment. Conton on the other hand, seem to be frustrated because of not using his international experience in SLMFA after the return. Most of the repatriates expressed similar sentiment like the one shared by Conton.

#### 4.2.4 Co-workers and the home organization

From the overall interviews it was evident that some of the repatriates especially those who did not visit the home organization during the overseas assignment experience multitude of changes upon returning to the home organization. Some of the changes the repatriates experienced include the establishment of new administrative positions that handles all IT related work within the organization, the disappearance of the strong network that the repatriates were once part of at the home organization before they travel abroad to work as expatriates, conflict because of changes in perception between some of SLMFA home base employees some of whom had never made a trip abroad and some of

the returnees who have returned back to the home organization to continue working again after a lengthy international service abroad. In the following section are comments made by Santegie and Amara in relation to experience with co-workers.

*This working place used to be like my back yard where I recognized the names of every friendly and unfriendly flowers that I have planted in my yard over the years. At this moment I can't tell which flower is friendly or unfriendly at my working place, and what makes it even worse is to learn about the disappearance of my entire network of friends in this place due to retirements, transfer within the home country, overseas assignment and other ill related causes. Most of this people that I am working with at this moment are not familiar to me and it is going to take me time to adjust and to know who my workmates are (Santegie).*

During the interview the author of this thesis ask Santegie to clarify his friendly and unfriendly flower metaphor in order for the author of this thesis and readers of this thesis to comprehend what he meant, and Santegie continue.

*My friendly flowers metaphor indicates flowers or leaves that stays on the tree/branch and does not fall on the ground and give me cause to sweep my yard. The unfriendly flowers are those flowers or leaves that fall in huge quantity in my yard which gives me cause to toil and sweat as I clean my yard. To make it simple for you - friendly flowers refers to people who are nice, friendly, and easy to get along with at SLMFA, and unfriendly flowers refers to people who are difficult, hard to be friends with, and hard to work with at SLMFA (Santegie).*

*There is always some kind of suspicion and hesitancy on the side of some of my workmate to include me in some of the major project that SLMFA is working on. This people just don't recognize the vast experience that I have in international foreign affairs, and it frustrates me to see the motivation that I arrived with from overseas being dissipated because of co-workers who are just too ambitious here and who are doing everything in their capacity to further their own personal goal and interest rather than the goals and interest of this organization. A new working culture has develop in my working place while I was away, and now that I have returned I have to painfully readjust in order to fit into the new culture that now exist in this place. It makes me upset but there is nothing I can do at this moment (Amara).*

Many changes occurred in the organization during the repatriate's period abroad as a result of the Sierra Leone civil war which lasted for over a decade including a series of military coup between 1992 to 1997. Despite the organizational changes and frustration expressed by some of the repatriates, the study shows that other repatriates were still able to get along very well with some of the new and old co-workers in the organization which makes the adjustment to their job environment more gratifying. Some repatriates

expressed that their first year at SLMFA after the return was extremely difficult and confusing because of the changes they experienced at their working place. Some stressed that it was only after a year they begin to get acquainted with their working place environment.

Majority of the repatriates stressed that there were vast differences in cultures and the way job is done in Sierra Leone when compared to the overseas countries that they have been working in, and this differences affects their adjustment at the home organization for a long time. Though frustrated with the changes and other issues related to SLMFA repatriation process, all the repatriates stressed that they don't intend to quit the organization because of possible opportunity to be sent abroad again by SLMFA including their aspiration of being promoted to a higher position as they continue to work for SLMFA. The current study shows that adjustment to work was affected by different variables such as the repatriate's experience with changes at the home organization, repatriate's perceptions about co-workers, and co-workers' perception of the returnees themselves at the home organization.

#### **4.3 Non-work Adjustment**

Themes related to adjustment outside the workplace will touch on issues related to the repatriates: lifestyle adjustment, adjustment to the home culture, financial adjustment, and repatriates relationship with family and friends. The repatriate's ability to easily adjust back to the previous lifestyles that they were once accustomed to in Sierra Leone before the overseas assignment was extremely difficult for most of the participants who took part in this study. Because of the longer period some of the repatriates spent abroad they have lost certain element of their 'original cultural makeup' and 'authentic self', and from the interviews it was clear that majority of the participant experience bigger changes and drop in their lifestyles upon returning to Sierra Leone. The current study shows that majority of the repatriate's attitudes, habits, economic situation, standard of living, and general perception about life has changed due to the longer period of time spent abroad.

Because of the broadness in issues related to lifestyle adjustment during the nine interviews the author of this theses has chose to limit and elaborate on five major



premises that dominates the issue of lifestyle adjustment during the interview with the nine repatriates. The five major premises include the repatriates: 1. financial adjustment, 2. family adjustment, 3. adjustment with friends, 4. adjustment with extended family members, and 5. adjustment to the home country culture. The five major premises will be discussed in the next section below.

#### 4.3.1 Financial adjustment

One of the most dominant themes concerning non-work adjustment has to do with financial hardship which affects the lives of the repatriates and his/her family. Upon returning to the home country repatriates are usually dumfounded about the wage they are receiving upon returning to their own home country. All the benefits and compensation packages that the organization has offered to the repatriates during the overseas assignments such as high salary, holiday allowances, house rent, cars, recreation and other benefits will vanish when the repatriates return to their home country. Adama and Conton shared their experience with their financial situation after the return.

*Financial difficulties has really hit me and my family very hard since our return to Sierra Leone. Things are so expensive here, and what makes it more difficult is the hopeless currency that we are using in this country which could not buy you the things that you really want. The only thing I could do when I receive my salary is to manage to put food on the table for me and my family, and nothing more. During my international assignment in Malaysia I use to take my family out once a week for a dinner, and after dinner we will end up spending the rest of the day in malls buying cheap stuff that I usually sent back home to family members and friends. Now that we have returned home I hardly have enough money for this sort of things (Adama).*

Changes in the repatriate's financial situation lead to a situation where the repatriates begins to struggle in their home country because of not being able to leave the life style that they have accustomed to during the overseas assignment. Most of the repatriates who participated in this study express similar sentiment shared by Adama during the individual interviews.

*The wage that I now earn at home is hardly enough for me and my family. My salaries are usually gone before I receive another paycheque, and my wage is barely enough to leave the type of lifestyle we have used to when we were staying in Germany. During the overseas assignment in Germany I used to buy cheap air tickets for me and my*

*family to visit a family friend in Spain. Now that I have return to my country I could not afford to travel to Spain anymore with my family. Financially I was doing fine over there, and now that we have come home we are back to ground zero without enough money to spend (Conton).*

Despite the financial hardship that some of the repatriates experienced upon returning to Sierra Leone the study still shows that four of the repatriates were doing very well financially and were able to purchase their own houses before they repatriated to Sierra Leone. Three of the repatriates already have their own home in Sierra Leone before they were sent abroad by SLMFA. The other two repatriates were unable to afford their own home before and after the overseas assignment, and they are presently staying in public flats where they pay monthly rent from time to time. The interviews show that majority of the repatriates experience financial difficulties upon returning to Sierra Leone except for four of the repatriates (three single and one with spouse and children) who stressed the soundness of their financial situation due to lots of savings during their overseas assignment.

One repatriate who is feeling the brunt of financial hardship stressed that the only way he could escape the financial hardship is to put in a new application for another possible overseas assignment. However, he stressed that such assignments are difficult to get because of some corrupted individuals at SLMFA who may prefer their own relatives or cronies for the overseas assignment rather than someone like himself who do not have strong contact or network in the foreign ministry. The repatriate stressed that his core reason for applying for the international assignment was to be self sufficient with money that could enable him to leave a lifestyle that he could not afford in Sierra Leone. Upon returning back to Sierra Leone many of the repatriates struggle to adjust because of the various lifestyles they were leaving during the overseas assignment, and from the interviews it was evident that majority of the repatriates experience difficult changes in lifestyle upon returning back to Sierra Leone.

#### 4.3.2 Family adjustment

From the individual interviews it was evident that four of the repatriates were accompanied by their spouse and children for the international assignment abroad. The four repatriates stated that the move abroad together with their family was a good

decision especially for the educational upbringing of their children. Some of the repatriates especially those from some of the Western countries stressed that their children's educational standard improved because of the good education offered in those countries. The experience of bringing the family back to the home country was extremely difficult for repatriates who were accompanied by their spouse and children abroad. Some of the problems that the repatriates lay emphasis on include jobs for their spouses and better education for their children as they try to settle down in Sierra Leone. In the following section are experience shared by returnees with spouse and children.

*I think it is very important that SLMFA makes it clear to all the staff that are now going abroad that the overseas assignment is not only going to affect them individually, but may also have an enormous impact on the repatriate's spouse during his/her quest for job upon returning home including other circumstances that surrounds our children's schooling in Sierra Leone. Most of my colleagues are so overwhelmed with joy about the overseas assignment and they completely fail to realise the repercussion of repatriation and how it affects our spouses and children when we return back to Sierra Leone. You can't believe it since we arrived over a year ago my husband hasn't got a job yet to do, we just hope that something will come up soon (Adama).*

In this current study only one of the repatriate spouses was able to secure a job upon returning to Sierra Leone. It was clear that the acclimatization of expatriates was compounded with lots of problems related to their spouses quest for jobs and the obstacle that their children face once again as they enter into the Sierra Leone educational system after a long stay in a foreign country.

*One of the biggest problems we face in our family during the return involves the adaptation of our 10 and 13 years old children at one of the primary school in Sierra Leone. The children were small when we left, and attending primary school in Sierra Leone is causing our children lots of stress and confusion about the entire primary school system in this country. Our children sometimes act like zombies in that school as they struggle to make new friends and met with other pupils at their primary school in Sierra Leone. It is getting better now – but I tell you it was really hard and difficult for them during their first three month in that school (Conton).*

Some of the repatriates stated that the adaptation and adjustment process of their family was considered to be a much bigger problem than their own individual struggle with the adjustment process in Sierra Leone. Repatriates who were accompanied by their spouse and children also confirmed their daily struggle with economical hardship and changes in their social status upon returning to Sierra Leone. Most repatriates with family

stressed that the problems for their state of condition is exclusively the result of poor repatriation management practices by SLMFA and its human resource managers in Sierra Leone who do not fully comprehend the way to handle and manage repatriation. As seen in the comments above, it was evident that repatriates who were accompanied by their family experienced lots of difficulties as they try to settle down in Sierra Leone after their lengthy stay abroad.

#### 4.3.3 Adjustment with friends

This current study indicates that all repatriates considered friendship in their home country to be significant part of their lives during the overseas assignment and majority of them tried to keep in touch with some friends they have left behind during the international assignment. It was also clear that four of the former SLMFA expatriates receive few of their friends including few family members from Sierra Leone who pay them a visit during the overseas assignment. Despite this positive step, there were three repatriates who did not make any contact with their friends in Sierra Leone during the international assignment, and they stressed that they noticed varying differences and attitudes in some of their friends upon returning back to Sierra Leone. Three repatriates stressed that the friendly relationship that once exist between them and their friends before the international assignment has all gone cold because of their long absence from Sierra Leone. One repatriate stressed that the psychological impact of the vicious civil war, which lasted for over a decade, could be a major factor which may have changed the mindset of the people that they once considered as best friend, and who do not see them anymore as friends. The following experience is shared by Amara, Lamina, and Amadu in relation to adjustment with friends.

*Friends that I used to sit and talk with for one to two hours before my overseas assignment could no longer sit and exchange few sentences with me. All we could do now when we see each other at home is say 'hello-hello' and nothing more. My expectation was that everything would be the same as before when I join my friends again in Sierra Leone, and they will be delighted to see me again after my long absence from home. I was expecting my friends to ask me questions about my overseas assignment, I was also eager to learn something from them about my other friends in town, life in Sierra Leone, and other information that may have helped ease my adjustment. I guess this people no longer care for friends, or maybe they are having some kind of reservation about me because of my long absence from home (Amara).*

Some of the repatriates feel a sense of abandonment upon returning to their home country because of friends who have chose to distance themselves from the repatriates. The repatriate's long absence from their home country during the overseas assignment has lead to the disappearance of the bonds that once exists between them and their best friends. The three repatriates faced a situation where they would either start a new friendly relationship in Sierra Leone or gradually try to revive the friendly relationship that they once had at home with old friends.

*To be sincere re-establishing friendship upon returning to this country has not been easy. Some of the friends that I used to hang around with before my overseas assignment have moved away while others have gone abroad to seek better life. I sometimes find it difficult to reconnect with some of the other few friends that I see around this place. These people seem so occupied with things that are going on in their lives, and some of them don't even notice me when I am around, or maybe they just want to ignore me so that I may not share my overseas experience with them (Lamina).*

*My friends pretend as if they don't see me or know me anymore when we bump into each other in town, and I also act the same way when I see them. I guess this behaviour has to do with our egos – they feel too good to approach me and I also feel the same way when I see them. I feel pain in my heart to see people that I once make jokes and laugh with now passing by as if we have never known each other before or have something in common in the past. It is possible they don't want me to know anything about their lives and they don't want to know anything about mine (Amadu).*

The difficulty that confronted some of the repatriates was that they were not able to reconnect with old friends they have known in their own home country before the international assignment. Although many of the repatriates managed to get on fairly well with their friends in Sierra Leone, few were not so fortunate. Few repatriates stressed that they were like strangers to their friends and some of their extended families, and they felt the absence of the bond that once existed between them and their friends, and some of their extended family members. As seen in the comments above, it is evident that some of the repatriates felt a sense of loss in relation to friends who have tend to ignore them when they returned back to Sierra Leone.

In relation to dealing with their friends in Sierra Leone, some of the repatriates in this current study failed to realize that their friend's strange behaviour towards them could be the result of changes or habits that they may have developed during the international assignment which makes them very unapproachable by the people they have once

considered as friends. For example, before the overseas assignment many of the repatriates used to put on their traditional African dresses on a regular basis in Sierra Leone when going to work, town, meetings, religious gathering, party or visiting friends - and upon returning to Sierra Leone the repatriates will replace their African dresses for a Western made suits which are sometimes considered an attribute of wealth in the eyes of those friends who have never had one in their entire life time. By clinging on to their Western made suits in Sierra Leone after the overseas assignment the repatriates are sending clear message to their old friends in Sierra Leone that they are no longer the same people they have known before the overseas assignment, and that they have changed. Such changes in dressing are enough to make old friends in Sierra Leone keep their distance from the repatriates who have return back to Sierra Leone after a lengthy international service abroad.

#### 4.3.4 Adjustment with extended family members

Repatriation is a journey back to the home country where the repatriates will reunite again with his/her extended family members such as aging parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles, aunts, etc. after the international assignment. From the interviews it became clear that most of the repatriates get along very well with many of their extended family members. In relation to issues concerning extended family members Conton and Lamina express themselves in the following ways.

*I can't tell you how blessed I am to come home again after such a long time and see my aging parents doing fine in their old age. My parents were happy to see us again, and we were delighted to feel their love once again after such a long period of time. Most of my friends lost their parents during the brutal civil war in this country (referring to the past civil war in Sierra Leone) and were not so lucky to come back home and see them alive. My relationship with my parents has always been good since I left until this moment when am back home again. My only worry now is to see how best I can support them in their old age. I go over to visit them sometimes because they can hardly move these days due to their age and frail body (Conton).*

*Most of my extended family members came over to visit me when I returned back to Sierra Leone after my service abroad. I guess they were coming over to see how I look like after spending twelve years abroad without contacting most of them with the exception of my parents. I received few letters and some e-mails from some of my extended family, but was too busy to reply to them. I was thinking that they will be upset with me for not replying to their letters and e-mails when I return back. It was really a surprise to see the kind of reception that I receive from them. Three of my*

*sister's sons came over to visit me few days after my arrival and I was shocked to see how big and tall the children have grown (Lamina).*

The repatriates relationship with their extended family members seem to be shrouded with less difficulties when compared to the repatriates relationship with their old friends in Sierra Leone. In this current study majority of the repatriates seem to be pleased with the reception that they have from their extended family members when they return back to Sierra Leone. Repatriates who did not even contact extended family members during the overseas assignment said that they were treated kindly by members of their extended family when they return back to Sierra Leone.

#### 4.3.5 Adjustment to culture and experience of reverse culture shock

Repatriates who were working for SLMFA in the Western countries expressed that they experienced changes in their culture and changes in the people that they left behind in Sierra Leone for their lengthy international service abroad. Also, some of the repatriates expressed experience of reverse culture shock upon returning to Sierra Leone. Most of the participants stressed that it was much harder for them to return home than to go overseas. It also became clear that the participants had made significant preparation before leaving for the overseas assignment and less preparation for their return back to Sierra Leone. Prior to moving abroad, SLMFA gave more assistance to the expatriates than the assistance that they offered to the expatriates upon returning to Sierra Leone. Some of the interviewees stated that SLMFA helped by giving outstanding allowances which enable them to buy furnitures and household materials that they need in the foreign countries including formal education about the foreign countries and their cultures. In regards to cultural shock and reverse culture shock, the following experience were shared by some of the repatriates.

*Before my overseas assignment, we used to assist each other in our neighbourhood when close friends are sick or needed help with their chores. Nowadays I don't see anything of that sort in my community. People just don't care anymore about other people in this community. I guess the psychological impact of the past civil war in our country still lingered in the minds of most of this people. The culture I left behind twelve years ago when I went to work abroad was a culture where people care for each other and not only for themselves. People here no longer share the bond that we once shared in this community. I am baffled with the cultural transformation that I am*

*now witnessing upon returning to this country especially with the young people (Isatu).*

Isatu expressed her dissatisfaction with the changes she has experienced in the people that once assisted her in her neighbourhood before she went to work abroad for SLMFA. She stressed that cultural values and people's perception about life in her community in Sierra Leone has changed during her long absence from the country. The repatriates themselves may have adopted strong foreign cultural values or ways of doing things which other people in the home country might find strange because of the repatriate's long stay abroad.

*It was so clean and quiet when I left this community twelve years ago, nowadays you find pile of trash in most of the street corners you visit in this city. And what seem the most shocking is the perpetual noise generated by street vendors who are playing very loud music on our street from dusk to dawn in order to draw people's attention to the latest music that has just been released by top musicians around the world. All this rubbish was never part of our culture and it upset me a lot when I see these things. I used to leave in a tidy and quiet suburb in Germany during my overseas assignment and this is not the sort of atmosphere that I was expecting when I return back home. Our city has become so noisy and congested, and it is really difficult for me to stomach this sort of development (Conton).*

It was evident that Conton was struggling to adjust to the cultural changes that has taken place in his home country while he was abroad for such a longer period of time. Conton expressed comparison between his overseas dwelling in Germany and the present environment that he finds himself in as he was going through the adjustment phase in Sierra Leone.

The repatriates' reentry into Sierra Leone has lead to psychological stress in readapting to the conditions and culture shock that they were experiencing upon their return. The returning repatriates' experiences with the cultural transformation resemble that of the U-shape and the W-shape curve. Prior to returning the repatriates experiences rise in their overall psychological adjustment in Sierra Leone. However, because the rise is characterized by the repatriate's approach to learning new ways of thinking and behaving in their home culture, they tend to be engulfed in an emotional psychological low point upon returning to their home country/Sierra Leone. This is then followed by a rise in adjustment as the repatriates learn to readapt again to the environment in Sierra Leone.



When the period of adjustment is extended to cover the repatriation process the adjustment curve begins to resemble the W-curve as new U-curve begins to develop upon arrival back home (Torbjörn, 1982, 94)

Repatriates may have to adjust or gradually accept the new culture and lifestyle that has developed in their home country instead of dwelling on the past which may lead to more confusion for the repatriates who are already experiencing difficulties upon returning to their home country. Paying too much attention to the new culture or changes upon returning to the home country may only cause additional stress for the repatriates who are already experiencing difficulties as they try to adjust in their home country.

In regards to preparation for their trip abroad and preparation for their return to Sierra Leone the following statements were made by the repatriates.

*The preparation for the overseas trip was well planned and organized, SLMFA helped us with lot of stuff like locating the house and paying part of our rent, take us to the new house in order to have a glance at it when we arrived, finding school for our children, help us around for a brief tour of the city and some of its best and cheapest mall where we can go for shopping while staying there. However, upon returning back home there was almost no assistance at all. For the trip abroad we were treated like a first born baby in the family that gets all the care and affection, and upon returning home they treated us like a child who is grown up and leave to fend for himself or herself. It was really painful (Adama).*

In Adama's opinion her trip to go abroad to serve SLMFA was well organized with lots of assistance given to her during the course of her international assignment abroad. Upon returning to Sierra Leone Adama stressed she did not receive the kind of assistance she receive from SLMFA as she did during her trip abroad.

*My thought about the return was that we are going to get the same assistance that was offered to us when we were leaving for the overseas assignment, but it was not like that. It was like a red carpet treatment during our departure from Sierra Leone, and upon returning back to Sierra Leone we find ourselves walking on a hard rocky soil without any carpet on it. It is a feeling that I could not describe to you unless you were there at the airport when we arrived home (Conton).*

Conton express similar sentiment as Adama in regards to their experience in serving SLMFA abroad and serving SLMFA in Sierra Leone. Cultural transformation took some of the SLMFA repatriates by surprise upon returning to Sierra Leone after the overseas

assignment. Upon arriving into their home country most of the repatriates felt like 'fish out of the water' (Oberg, 1960).

The current study shows that few repatriates, who have served in both Africa and in Asia for SLMFA, had very little concern about cultural transformation in Sierra Leone when compared to some of the repatriates who have served in some Western country. Interviewees who were stationed in Africa and in Asia claimed they did not experience any form of reverse culture shock. However, it became evident from the interviews that some of the repatriates, especially those who served in the West and who did not visit Sierra Leone during the international assignment, faced much reverse culture shock than the other participants who participated in this study. Repatriates who had returned back to SLMFA from the Western countries lay too much of an emphasis on how their culture has changed in Sierra Leone as oppose to their counterpart who were stationed in Africa and in Asia. In relation to culture, one repatriate who served in Asia, and another repatriate who served in Africa, made the following comments.

*My main focus after the return was to see how me and my family are going to cope with the adjustment. As far as our culture at home is concerned, it would be impossible to maintain it, and there is nothing I could do to preserve our culture in Sierra Leone. My only reaction to the new cultures that I have notice upon returning to this country was to gradually accept them as long as they don't pose any threat to this country and its people. With the emergence of an enhance media technology that brings the universe much closer together and the movement of people from one country to another I see no reason why we as repatriates should focus too much on issues concerning changes that has occured in our culture at home. It is just a waist of time. As far as I am concerned, today's cultures are like new trendy dresses that we bought from a boutique and then put them on for a while as we watch the colour of the dress gradually fades away and the trend of that particular dress disappeared from site with the coming of another new trendy dress by new breed of generation (Adama).*

Adama stressed that it is waste of time for other repatriates to worry about cultural transformation because of the changes in the world and the impact of technology on Sierra Leonean. Some repatriates who served in the West do not share similar sentiment as Adama.

*The only cultural changes I experienced upon arriving home has to do with some of our teenagers whose lives has been taken over by hip-up culture that has its origin in the United States of America. During my visits from Nigeria to Sierra Leone, I noticed very few numbers of our youngster behaving like hip-up's in this country, and now that I have settled down at home I have seen an increase in their numbers compared to the*

*time when I was visiting home. Our youngsters here emulate much of the life style that is so conversant in the hip-up culture in the US and this development is worrying for some parents in this country who have negative perception about hip-up culture. The hip-up culture here doesn't border me at all – my only concern after the return was to get back to work after few days of rest (Brima).*

The perception and experience of changes felt by the repatriates after the return were varied, and some of the interviewees felt that SLMFA organization in Sierra Leone had changed during their time abroad. Old friends have left or relocated, past networks had disappeared, and some friends and neighbours have changed. Some of the repatriates also realized that they too have changed during the overseas assignment. Most of the repatriates stated that their lifestyle has diminished considerably upon returning to Sierra Leone. The interviewees stressed that they were better off in terms of their living standard abroad when compared to their present situation in Sierra Leone.

The next section will elaborate on themes related to the repatriate's psychological adjustment.

#### **4.4 Psychological Adjustment**

Individual psychological adjustment is influence by several factors and it is at the core of repatriation experience. It should be said that all repatriation variables and psychological adjustment are interconnected even though much of the repatriates' attention are centered on their physical adjustment than that of their psychological adjustment. To comprehend psychological adjustment one need to grasp the fundamental nature of repatriation. The prime theme in the literature on psychological adjustment is developing accurate expectations (Black and Gregersen 1998; Black et al. 1992). According to MacDonald (2002) repatriation psychological adjustment occurs over time, and they are influenced by choice, expectations, perception of loss, opportunities, and strategies. In the next following section, issues related to the participants' psychological adjustment will be presented in order to explain their experience with (1) *choice*, (2) *opportunities*, (3) *expectation*, and (4) *strategies* that were adopted in order to cope during the transition period in Sierra Leone.

#### 4.4.1 Choice

Choice refers to the participant's individual decision and perception about their return to Sierra Leone. From the interviews it became clear that while majority of the interviewees accepted their return back to Sierra Leone, few tend to despise the return because of personal agendas they thought has not been fulfilled before their final return to Sierra Leone. Few repatriates were surprised at the decision that SLMFA has made for them to return back to Sierra Leone. While Memunatu and the other repatriates embraced the return, Amara and Lamina stressed their disappointment about SLMFA's decision for them to return back to Sierra Leone. Memunatu, Amara, and Lamina express the following comments in regards to their choice.

*To be honest the return has not been easy for me but I think it was perfect choice for me to be come back home. I think coming back was the right thing to do since I might secure a top level position at home that I may not acquire if I continue working abroad for SLMFA. SLMFA will forget about me and they will not give me the promotion that I deserve if I continue to stay and work abroad for our foreign ministry. There are new opportunities and I am already a beneficiary of some of those opportunities. You have more advantage when you are here than staying abroad all the time. All important decisions that affect us during expatriation are made right here at home, and not abroad – that is why the return makes perfect sense to me (Memunatu).*

Memunatu considered her return to be the right choice because of promotion and other opportunities that she could not have access to if she continue working abroad for SLMFA. She stressed that it was the right choice to return back to SLMFA in Sierra Leone.

*I was really upset when I received a letter from SLMFA informing me about the date and time of my departure back home. I was baffled because I was not well prepared to return back home. It was a period in my life when everything seem to be going in the right direction until SLMFA turn my life up-side-down with a single letter including other two separate letters that I later received from them. The return has been nothing more but a painful adjustment for me. I did not prepare at all, and it's a pity I did not have much option at this moment (Amara).*

*I was not fully prepared for the return, and it was never my choice. SLMFA decision to call me back to Sierra Leone take me by surprise, and they really let me down on several issues that I feel painful to talk about. Anyway, life must go on. The only thing that courages me here is the job and position that I now occupy in our foreign ministry at home. I am planning to put in another application to see if I could have chance to serve SLMFA abroad once again. I know it is not easy but I have to try (Lamina).*

Participants who made significant plans before their return to Sierra Leone were able to adjust much easier than those individuals whose return took them by surprise despite the advance six month notice that they receive from SLMFA before the final return to Sierra Leone. The result indicate that the return has not been easy for some of the participants, but those participants who pay attention to SLMFA's advance six month notice before the return, have more positive attitude towards the return than those who treated the notice in a more careless way.

#### 4.4.2 Opportunities

Repatriate's assumption about opportunities upon returning to their home country and the home organization could help speed the repatriate's adjustment. Although there are difficulties surrounding repatriation, majority of the repatriates stressed that repatriation can be good if such opportunities like promotion, high wage, better job position and living condition exist before the final return to the home organization. The more opportunities for repatriates at the home organization, the more easily the adjustment was for the returning repatriate. In the following section few of the repatriates explain their experience about lost opportunities and opportunities gained upon their return to Sierra Leone.

*I was pleased and satisfied with our children's education during the overseas assignment, and here at home we cannot make up for those lost opportunity. The standard of education was much better over there than here (Conton).*

In Conton's opinion the educational opportunities for his children were much greater during the overseas assignment than the present educational system in Sierra Leone. Another repatriate who was accompanied by his wife and children expressed similar sentiment as Conton during the interviews. It seemed that families who were stationed in the West considered education as lost opportunity for their children upon returning to Sierra Leone.

*Returning back home to the job that I once held in our ministry is considered an opportunity for me especially when I find myself so close to those that make important decisions in our ministry this time. I know lots of my friend who have returned back*

*and found out that they are going to be placed in position that they are not satisfied with in our foreign ministry (Memunatu).*

*I definitely consider my position as opportunity at our ministry despite my premature return. It is an enviable job for most people at this working place, and it is exactly the kind of position I was hoping for upon returning to SLMFA (Lamina).*

While Memunatu and Lamina shows some appreciation for the job and opportunity that is given to them upon returning to Sierra Leone, other repatriates like Conton considered the return as a loss opportunity for him especially his children. It seemed only few repatriates were fortunate to have experience opportunity in this study, and for the majority it was nothing more but difficult experience after the return. Overall, it seemed opportunities upon repatriation clearly impacted the psychological adjustment of the repatriates.

#### 4.4.3 Expectations

Expectations are at the core of repatriation satisfaction. Inaccurate expectations upon returning to the home country often cause psychological readjustment problems for the returning repatriates. When expectations are met, the adjustment and transition become much easier for the repatriates, and when expectations are not met, the repatriates may find it difficult to adjust at the home working place and the community to which they have returned to after a lengthy period abroad. In this current study, only four participants expressed that their expectation were met, and the remaining five expresses dissatisfaction about their expectations upon returning to Sierra Leone. Repatriates whose expectations were met and those whose expectations were not met share their experience in the following section.

*To be sincere, as far as my job is concerned everything goes exactly the way I was expecting it to be despite my long absence from SLMFA. I was even surprised to see some improvement in our department upon my return. This time there were much access to the latest technology and other vital tools that make my job easy when compared to the time before my overseas trip. The new technological tools that has been brought in really make my work life easy upon returning to this ministry (Isatu).*

*My expectations supersede the negative thought that I had upon returning to SLMFA. To put it simple I got exactly what I was expecting upon the return despite the cloud that still surround my return back home. My expectations were met even though still baffled about my impromptu return to this country (Lamina).*

As shown above, both Isatu and amina express some satisfaction about their expectations. Despite Lamina's disappointment about the return it was evident from the interviews that both he and Isatu's expectations were met as opposed to the other repatriates whose expectation were unmet in this study. Returning to a job that did not meet repatriate's expectation upon return, may cause further stress in the way the repatriates handle his/her transition to adjustment. Both Conton and Adama whose job expectations were not meet upon returning to Sierra Leone, share their own experiences below.

*Upon returning home, I was expecting a better position due to the extensive knowledge that I have acquired in international foreign affairs abroad - instead they just dumped me into a crowded office reserved for most of the newcomers who had just been enlisted on SLMFA's payroll with little experience in international foreign affairs. I was really upset with this demotion which could not be compared to the responsibility that I shouldered during my international assignment. The job environment and the living environment were just too hard to bear (Conton).*

*Upon returning home, my expectations begins to falter when I heard from one of our senior staff at SLMFA that a temporary position has been reserved for me until further notice. This was not the sort of job condition I was expecting when I returned home. I found the temporary job very peculiar because it did not met the standard of experience that I have already acquired in international foreign affairs. This situation caused lots of excess stress in my repatriation, and I was unsure about my future in our foreign ministry (Adama).*

Upon returning home, most of the repatriates were expecting better job positions, opportunities and reward for the time they have spent working abroad for SLMFA, and majority of the repatriates stressed that there expectations were not met and they were disappointed about their return to SLMFA. Repatriates whose expectations were met in this study demonstrated their commitment to SLMFA the organization that sent them abroad, and those whose expectations were not met tend to be disappointed and frustrated about the way they were treated by SLMFA. Repatriates whose expectations were not met, were asked if they would like to quit their job because of their disappointment and the unfortunate job offer they have receive from SLMFA after the return. They stressed that it is not an option for them to leave their job at this moment. From the interviews it became apparent that some of the repatriates were quite unprepared for their return to Sierra Leone, and they stressed their expectations were coupled up with some shocking and negative experience upon returning to SLMFA and

their home country. As far as job satisfaction is concerned, repatriates who are pleased with their job after the return seemed to be motivated about their job which impacted their psychological adjustment in a much positive way. Repatriates whose expectations are not met tend to be very unhappy with the current job position that they held, and they are in a perpetual resentful mode which is having a negative impact on their psychological adjustment.

#### 4.4.4 Strategies

Strategies in this study refer to those coping strategies that enable the repatriates to get on with their lives despite the difficult circumstances they are confronted with upon repatriation. Stone et al. (1988,183) define coping as “actions and thoughts that enable individuals to handle difficult situations”. Strategy to cope at the working place and outside the working place was clearly expressed by some of the returning repatriates even though some of them find it difficult to explain what their precise coping strategies were. Strategies to cope during the time of adjustment in Sierra Leone varied among the repatriates, and some of their coping strategy variation could be explain in the following section.

*Making use of the annual visit was considered as one of my paramount coping strategy and adjustment advantage after the return. The visits did not only help me to adjust quickly, but it also enabled me to settle down without much difficulties. This is not time to point finger at someone for the adjustment problems I am experiencing – it is my life and I am sure I am going to make it through (Memunatu).*

The home coming visit was considered to be a strategy for Memunatu to cope quickly during her adjustment in Sierra Leone and her working place. She stressed that her coping strategy was closely linked to the visit that she made to Sierra Leone during her assignment abroad. It seemed that Menunatu was more of a proactive and resocialized re-enterer who despite of difficulties during the adjustment was able to handle her adjustment better than some of the other repatriates. Conton, Lamina, and Amara express their coping strategy in the following section.

*Religious practices and community project is seen as a source of my coping strategy in this country. Instead of focusing on the tribulation that I and my family are going through – I instead chose to become active member of a Church that has many social activities in our neighbourhood. Through the church I came across prominent people*



*who helped me a lot with issues concerning myself and my family. They all helped tremendously during the peak of the adjustment (Conton).*

When Conton was asked to come up with a specific coping strategy that he adopted during his adjustment at his working place he replied:

*I always try to keep a low profile during my working hours in order to avoid conflict with some of my co-workers (I mean some of the co-workers who have just arrived home like myself including others whom I met at SLMFA after my return). I am sorry if I don't answer the question right for you – but I think attending fellowship and prayer meeting is considered as coping strategy for me because all this things helped me and my family to cope during difficult time in this country (Conton).*

Being involved in religious activities was considered to be Conton's coping strategy when he is not at work, and at his working place he stressed keeping a low profile as his main coping strategy because through this act he could possibly be able to avoid conflict with some of his work mate after the return. It could be seen that Conton was more of an alienated re-enterer who found the adjustment in Sierra Leone including the adjustment at his working place extremely difficult due to his long service abroad and possible transformation that had taken place in his life during his service abroad.

*My coping strategy in Sierra Leone was already figure out before my impromptu return to this country. My own strategy to cope was firmly tied to my IT gadgets including other electronic devices that enable me to watch Nigerian movies and also see a wider picture of the world right in my flat. Through my laptop computer I was able to reach friends that I have left behind in Belgium and in other parts of the world which usually make me laugh and forget about my adjustment problems for a while. My IT gadgets helped me immensely to cope with so many things out here despite the frequent power-cut that I am now experiencing upon returning to this country. At my working place I am very independent with my job except for few conversations that I usually have with my seniors concerning changes in our IT infrastructural system in our ministry. I think optimism keeps me going in our working place – there was always that part of me that says something big and something good will come up someday as I continue to work here (Lamina).*

Lamina stressed that his coping strategy has to do with his IT gadgets including his optimism that gave him course for hope at his working place. Much of Lamina's coping strategy was more about his life out of his working place, and too little was mentioned about the kind of coping strategy he applied while he is at work.

*Upon returning to this country my coping strategy has been jogging and playing basket ball with some of the new friends that I have just made here upon my return. I*

*used to play basketball twice every week during my assignment abroad, and I was delighted to join some new friends who are also passionate about the game in my neighbourhood. My coping strategy at work was simply being proactive at all time despite the adjustment problem and financial difficulties I was experiencing. I always try to do my job well at work and not wait for some inexperience slacker to come and tell me what to do. I think it would have been terrible for me not to continue the new hobbies that I have got myself into while I was staying abroad. The game of basketball and jogging helped me a lot in dealing with my stress level while I was adjusting in this country (Amara).*

Amara stressed his coping strategy involves sport activities when he is not at work, and at his working place he tries to be proactive. The interviews show that coping strategy comes in various forms for the interviewees who participated in this study. It was apparent that majority of the repatriates in this study found it extremely difficult to explain what their coping strategies were especially when it comes to question about their working place.

Most of the coping strategies expressed by the repatriates seemed to focus on their lives out of the working place, and not much was mentioned about the working place. Some of the repatriates were also unsure about the strategies that they might have adopted while they were adjusting in Sierra Leone. When Isatu was asked to explain her coping strategy this is how she put it:

*I guess strategy to cope is something that comes naturally for anyone who is confronted with repatriation and experiencing difficulties. If you find yourself trap in deep wilderness I guess your alternative will either be to stay and perish in the wilderness or struggle to find your way out from the wilderness. I see repatriation as a wilderness, and since my arrival into this country I have adopted so many measures that I am sometimes unaware of just to get out of that wilderness. It is too premature for me to come up with specific strategies that keep me going in this country. It is really hard, but I am sure I will make it (Isatu).*

It is very possible that the participants would have come up with more concrete answers about their coping strategies if more concentration were given to this topic when they receive the interview guide. From the interviews it became evident that the repatriates did not have any blueprint in regards to their coping strategy before their return to Sierra Leone. It was also clear that most of the repatriates see coping strategy as something that comes naturally, and not something that deserves much planning and attention. Repatriate's strategy to cope could be much easily handled if early planning is put in

place before the repatriate's final return to Sierra Leone. The next section will examine the kind of pre-return and post-return assistance that SLMFA offered to its staff.

#### **4.5 ROLE OF ORGANIZATION IN REPATRIATION**

This section of the thesis will identify SLMFA's organizational role in repatriation which will focus mainly on issues related to organization's pre-return and post-return assistance. This section will examine the level of support and assistance that SLMFA offered to its staff prior to the international assignment and during the return. Support from SLMFA included financial aid for annual leave, housing, and children support for the adjustment.

Despite the disappointment for most of the repatriates involved in this study, SLMFA considered expatriation as a central role in the development of its future leaders. Through international assignments, its employees are able to improve their management skills at a global level which prepares them for complex tasks in both domestic and international foreign affairs.

From the interviews it became evident that the interviewees received much support and assistance from the home organization when they were leaving for the overseas assignment and when they were serving abroad. According to most of the interviewees, SLMFA's assistance towards the overseas assignment was much better when compared to the assistance that were offered to the interviewees upon returning to Sierra Leone.

##### **4.5.1 Pre-return assistance**

SLMFA's aid to its overseas staff comes in various forms in regards to the overseas assignment and the returning of the repatriates to Sierra Leone. Despite the disappointment with some of the pre-return issues, it was clear that the participants including those who were accompanied with their spouse and children received hefty sum for their annual leave, especially those employees who were stationed in the West where the standard of living was said to be much higher. Participants who were stationed in Africa and in Asia received less financial aid when compared to the financial aid received by participants who were stationed in some of the major Western countries such

as Belgium, France, Germany, UK and the US. Despite the annual leave allowance it was clear that only few of the interviewed participants visited Sierra Leone and SLMFA during their annual leave. Those few who took advantage of the holiday trip to visit Sierra Leone and SLMFA, cited that the trip enables them to keep in touch with love ones at home, their network at home, and also prepares them for the final return to their home country.

In regards to finance, housing, schooling, and other support - Memunatu, Isatu, and Conton shared their experience in the following section.

*I cannot tell you my financial aid during the overseas assignment was one hundred percent better – but at least it enables me to accomplish so many things that I could no longer afford upon returning to this country. To some extent I was pleased with the financial aid that I receive from our ministry during the overseas assignment (Memunatu).*

*The financial aid was a good source of support during my service abroad – through it I was able to make few trips abroad together with my family which is just impossible at this moment in time. Our ministry was partly responsible for our house rent during the assignment abroad. In addition to this, the ministry also assisted us at the early stage of our children schooling which helped a lot during the stressful adjustment phase abroad (Conton).*

All of the interviewees seemed to be pleased with the financial aid that was offered to them during the overseas assignment. All the interviewees stressed that their financial aid during the international assignment could not be compared to that of the financial package that they are now receiving upon returning to Sierra Leone.

In regards to housing one repatriate said:

*I just miss the neighbourhood and the beautiful house that our foreign ministry offered me during my long service abroad. It was a beautiful place and they help with the rent during my entire stay. I am very grateful for such a support which could not come easily at home (Isatu).*

Most of the repatriates seemed to be pleased with the support that they receive from the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) during the overseas assignment. From the individual interviews it became apparent that SLMFA pays less attention to issues concerning support for the repatriates. When the question of pre-return training and orientation came up during the interviews, all the interviewees stressed there was no

such thing as pre-return training. One repatriate stressed that she was expecting pre-return training from SLMFA while she was waiting for the return, and not a long letter from SLMFA with detail information about her eventual return to Sierra Leone. Before the overseas trip all the participants were briefed, and then receive some basic form of educational training about the overseas assignment and the countries to which they are going to be sent to. Upon returning home, some repatriates stressed that the only form of briefing that they received from SLMFA was in a letter form which detail out some information about their return. This statement could be supported by most of the repatriates who stressed that SLMFA offer more support for the international assignment and show only little or no interest at all for the repatriates return.

#### 4.5.2 Post-return assistance

Despite the problems associated with SLMFA's repatriation process, the organization always try to inform its expatriates through their personal e-mail addresses and their foreign diplomatic postal addresses abroad about possible jobs position that are vacant in the foreign ministry in Sierra Leone. It is SLMFA's policy to encourage its expatriates or employees who are stationed abroad to apply for jobs that they might be interested in before the final return to Sierra Leone. With much restructuring and reduction of too many embedded bureaucratic system since its inception in the 1960s, SLMFA is now planning to modernize its organizational operations including hosting its own official internet webpage so that its employees at home and abroad can access information quickly about possible changes, vacancies and other vital information that the staff may want to know about.

The official webpage which SLMFA is now working on, will also serve as a gateway for SLMFA's staffs and the international community to quickly acquire information about SLMFA's organizational functions at home and abroad. Presently most of SLMFA's embassy and consulates around the world are responsible for the hosting of their own webpage with the supervision of senior IT staffs at SLMFA. The IT staff usually gave advice about the type of information or contents that needed to be displayed on the webpage that the embassies or consulates has hosted or already planning to host. The hosting of various embassy and consulate webpage (see for instance <http://www.embasyofsierraleone.org/> or <http://sierraleone.embassyhomepage.com>) is

causing confusion among SLMFA's staff around the world. Staff sometimes find it frustrating and difficult to acquire accurate information about issues concerning SLMFA employees and the organization itself. Because of this confusion and difficulties, SLMFA has now decided to work on a new plan that will see the removal of all its various internet webpages in replacement for a single and official SLMFA internet webpage in the near future. Through the official webpage employees can access work related information quickly while working abroad and in Sierra Leone. The official webpage will also include information about SLMFA's history, services, diplomatic missions, names of countries and region where SLMFA operates, current affairs, security issues and other issues related to Africa Union (AU) which the international community will have access to from time-to-time.

Currently all SLMFA's expatriates/staff receive information through postage and e-mails about possible vacancies and transformation that are taking place in the organization. With the hosting of its new webpage in the near future, SLMFA is anticipating that its organization will be able to serve and provide accurate information to its employees at home and abroad, and to members of the international community.

The study shows that interviewees who were proactive in terms of the number of contact they made with SLMFA during the overseas assignment receive minimal assistance for better job position including assistance for housing. It was clear that SLMFA did not have a well defined repatriation program which may have enabled the organization to accomplish a meaningful and successful repatriation for the returning repatriates.

When asked about the overall repatriation package or assistance received from SLMFA, some of the repatriates stressed that they were expecting some kind of simple welcoming event, a week of resting days after the return, help with children schooling, help with housing, help with shipping cost for the return of their furniture and other decorative household accessories including used cars that the repatriates have left behind in the foreign country where they used to work. Other repatriates stressed the home coming allowance, and other issues related to their working place in Sierra Leone which would have helped ease the adjustment process for them. All the repatriates wish that SLMFA would have done more to alleviate the problems and difficulties that the repatriates had been through after their return to Sierra Leone.

When the repatriates were asked if they had attempted to apply for possible position during the foreign assignment, and if any of them had received assistance from SLMFA upon returning to Sierra Leone, this is the response from three of the repatriates.

*When I was abroad I sometimes tried my luck to apply when I received e-mails from our foreign ministry that shows some open position. Some of the open positions are really good, and others are not so good - but to be honest with you most of those jobs are already gone before we open our e-mails to read them. There is that attitude of cronyism and nepotism that existed in our ministry, and if you don't have any inner connection in the ministry you will be wasting your time to apply for better job in our ministry (Adama).*

*The issue about vacant position in our ministry is sometimes seen as a joke to me. What I don't understand is to see our HR managers continue sending us e-mails and postage about jobs that are no longer there during my overseas assignment. I think our HR managers need to save their e-mails and postage stamps for something that is authentic (Amara).*

Adama and Amara tend to despise the e-mails that they used to receive from SLMFA concerning possible vacancy at the home organization when they were serving abroad. Both Adama and Amara stress that it is of no use to apply for open position which they think has already vanished before their application reach SLMFA's HR managers. In relation to assistance received from SLMFA, Lamina made the following comment:

*Not that the assistance were not there when I was returning to Sierra Leone – but those assistance could never be compared to the ones that was given to me when I was living for the overseas assignment (Lamina).*

Most of the repatriates express similar sentiments as Lamina in regards to support that they receive from SLMFA when they were going abroad. Upon returning to Sierra Leone all the repatriates stressed that the support was very poor and causes them lot of stress, pain and confusion during the adjustment.

## **5 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

This chapter will conclude by summarizing the main findings in perspective of the way in which the returnees experience repatriation, the strategies that the returnees used in order to cope, and the kind of repatriation assistance that the repatriates receive from SLMFA when they were preparing for the return until they start serving SLMFA again in Sierra Leone. Each of the three research questions in chapter one of this thesis will be discussed separately in order to present a clear-cut conclusions based on the data analysis of SLMFA repatriation.

The data for this study shows that there are number of conclusions to be drawn from in perspective of the case organization SLMFA, the repatriates experience with repatriation, the repatriates coping strategies to ease their repatriation adjustment, and the kind of assistance that the repatriates receive from SLMFA. Finally, the author of this thesis will elaborate on the implications for this current study, and then come up with suggestions for future research. The following section will conclude by summarizing the findings to the three research questions (see questions on chapter one) for SLMFA's repatriation.

#### **5.1.1 What was SLMFA staff experience with repatriation?**

The interviews for this current study reveal that the repatriates did not have much positive and meaningful experience with repatriation, and as such they all stress it was an excruciating experience that deserves further attention by SLMFA human resources managers and the organization as a whole. The study shows there is lack of forum and support groups where the repatriates could meet, exchange and share their experience about repatriation. Through a well organized forum by both the repatriates and senior HR managers at SLMFA, the underlying reason as to why repatriation continues to be such an excruciating experience for most SLMFA returnees could be further address. The research found there is an overwhelming sense of motivation among SLMFA employees when they are leaving for the overseas assignment, and upon returning to their home country the returnees becomes disenchanted due to unmet expectation and other problems that the repatriates are experiencing after their return to Sierra Leone.



Among the nine repatriates who participated in this study only few stresses that there expectation were met. In regards to met expectation on the job, the research shows a peculiar finding that has to do with one particular repatriates in this study whose job expectation was met because of IT (Information Technology) courses that he has been taking after his working hours during his assignment abroad. This particular repatriate was able to secure a well paid job at SLMFA after his return because of the skills and knowledge that he had acquired out from his working place while he was serving SLMFA abroad. The research found this repatriate to be very satisfied with his job, but was unhappy about his repatriation which he considered as intermission. The study found those whose job expectation were met tend to be pleased with the job that SLMFA had offered to them after the return, and those who were placed in temporary position after the return were resentful about their job, and considered it as unmet expectation. One of the strongest predictors of repatriation success for the returnees is job placement upon reentry (Black & Gregersen, 1998), and from the empirical study it can be seen that such a statement can be confirmed.

It seemed that the case organization in this study fail to realized that the job position that the repatriates has return to at home after serving abroad could have a major impact on the repatriates satisfaction. SLMFA should be well aware that when the repatriate job position is similar to that of the expatriate job position the better and more satisfying the repatriate will become. The greater the job satisfaction for the repatriate, the more committed the repatriate will become to serving his/her organization. SLMFA should assist and make sure that the international knowledge that the repatriates possesses during the overseas assignment is well monitored and then put into practice in the organization. There should be an organized forum where returning expatriates can demonstrate their international knowledge for SLMFA to see and then decides on the expatriate knowledge that they considered to be appropriate for the organization. Such act will lessen the conflict that usually exist between some of SLMFA's home base employees and the returning repatriates whose international knowledge are often interrupted by some of the home base employees who are sometimes uncomfortable, suspicious or resentful of the knowledge that the repatriates want to share with them. Managers at home often tend to exhibit xenophobic feeling towards repatriates with foreign ideas (Adler, 1981), but this same managers should also note that lot could be obtain from the repatriates' foreign ideas if the right approach is taken by managers at the home organization rather than discouraging or ignoring all together the set of

knowledge that the repatriates have arrived with. Psychological adjustment of returnees need to be understood by SLMFA HR managers, and more attention should be paid to the organization's repatriation process so that its repatriates may demonstrate similar spirit and motivation that they have shown when they were leaving for the overseas assignment. It is critical for an organization to manage its repatriation process successfully so that it can exploit fully the knowledge and skills of the returning expatriates (Malinowski, Paik, & Segaud, 2002).

#### 5.1.2 What strategies did SLMFA staff adopted to cope with repatriation?

This study found various forms of coping strategies were adopted out of the working place, and only few strategies were mention in regards to the repatriates working place. The coping strategies adopted by the repatriates include visit to the home country during the international assignment, repatriate involvement in religious practices, repatriate involvement in sport activities, the use of electronic gadgets by repatriate, and keeping a low profile at SLMFA's working place in Sierra Leone. The study found expatriates who took advantage of their annual leave during the international assignment to visit Sierra Leone find their coping less stressful than those expatriates who chose not to visit Sierra Leone during their annual vacation. In dealing with coping out of the working place, the study found one of the repatriate coping patterns has to do with electronic gadgets. The repatriate stressed when he is experiencing stressful situation during his adjustment after the return, his coping strategy was to turn to his TV for comfort or use his laptop computer to chat with friends he had met abroad during his international assignment. He stressed his electronic gadgets were his best tools in dealing with coping in Sierra Leone.

In regards to coping at the working place, only one repatriate in this study manage to come up with specific coping pattern that he had adopted when he start working at SLMFA's headquarter in Sierra Leone. The repatriate stressed his coping strategy at work after the return has been keeping a low profile in order to avoid conflict with other employees at his working place. The study found this repatriate to be the most alienated re-enterer of all the repatriates who partake in this study. It was also evident in this study that the alienated re-enterer spent most of his annual vacation (together with his family) in other foreign countries during his service abroad. His overall demeanor

towards his repatriation and the organization (SLMFA) that he is now working for in Sierra Leone tend to be much more negative when compared to some of the other expatriates who visited Sierra Leone quite often during their service abroad. Repatriates who have been in cultures very different from their home culture, and have stayed abroad for extended period of time can experience significant adjustment challenges during repatriation (Black, 1994). The study found reverse culture shock to be pervasive among repatriates who were serving in some of the Western countries, and did not visit Sierra Leone during their assignment abroad. Repatriates who were serving in Africa and Asia did not express much in relation to cultural shock and reverse culture shock as experienced by some of the repatriates who were serving in Europe. Through frequent visit to the country by the expatriates and his/her family, they may have the opportunity to obtain up to date information about work related changes, social changes, and general home country changes (Black et al., 1992a), which could help speed the repatriates coping pattern and reduce the level of reverse culture shock that the repatriate is experiencing in his/her home country after the return. Reverse culture shock can be avoided if there is perpetual communication between the expatriate and his/her mentor during the overseas assignment. The study found there were other repatriates who adopted coping strategies, but were unsure of what those coping strategies were. It is very essential for repatriates to adopt proactive rather than reactive behaviors in order to resist the cultural shock and surprises that surrounds repatriation.

All the repatriates in this study expressed that repatriation is difficult, but despite this assumption, some of the repatriates try to adopt certain form of coping strategies that eases their repatriation adjustment rather than focusing on the negative aspect of repatriation. The study found four resocialised reenterers with positive attitudes, and they tend to cope much better at the home organization than the other repatriates who have negative perception about their overall repatriation adjustment. Active re-enterers attempt to change themselves and their re-entry environment so that they could fit into the organization, and passive re-enterers do not embrace such transformation at all (Alder, 1981), which makes their coping pattern and adjustment much more difficult for them to handle. Repatriates' social skills could play a vital role towards the success of their adjustment, and through such social skills the repatriates may able to interact or communicate with people at their working place and in the communities where they have chose to stay after the international assignment.

### 5.1.3 What assistance do SLMFA offer its staff for repatriation?

Based on the research, it was evident that some of the repatriates were pleased with the support that SLMFA offers them while they were station abroad as expatriates. The research shows that there is very little emphasis on issues concerning the kind of support that the repatriates are receiving from SLMFA prior to their final return to Sierra Leone. The study shows only very few repatriates receive some form of post-return assistance from SLMFA when they arrived in Sierra Leone after the overseas assignment. In relation to pre-return assistance, the study found SLMFA expatriates receive much needed aid for housing, children schooling, leave allowances and other support during the overseas assignment. The study found that the assistance given to SLMFA's expatriates during the international assignment was much more meaningful than that of the assistance received by the repatriates in Sierra Leone. The research shows one of the core reasons behind SLMFA's staff expatriation and motivation for the overseas trip has to do with higher compensation package that the staffs are receiving during the international assignment. Reasonable amount of assistance to its repatriated staff in Sierra Leone would have made a huge difference if SLMFA has in place a well defined repatriation program in place that addresses core repatriation issues such as pre-return training, future career plans, better job position, mentor to brief the expatriate while he/she is working abroad, regular visit by the expatriates to the home country and the home office, support not only for the repatriates but also for the immediate family members who accompany them during the international assignment, counseling for repatriates who may need help with the adjustment at home, and reasonable wage increase that may help the returnees during the early adjustment phase in Sierra Leone.

The study found no mentor was assign to the expatriates while they were working abroad. All the returning repatriates stressed that they did not receive any pre-return training, and most of the repatriates stressed there was not enough channel of communication or no form of communication at all between them and SLMFA HR managers while they were serving abroad. One of the factors critical to the repatriates' adjustment is having the expatriate tightly connected to the home organization while he/she is serving abroad. An effective way to manage such critical factor is to assign a mentor to the expatriate who would inform him/her of possible job openings and organizational transformation that are taking place while the expatriate is serving abroad. It is essential that organization encourages its expatriate to choose a mentor who

already possessed international experience and comprehend the true meaning of repatriation adjustment. The selection of former repatriates as mentor with already much knowledge in repatriation may serve as a source of support for the overseas employee/expatriate who does not fully comprehend the meaning and agony of repatriation yet. It is also essential that the organization's HR managers keep in touch with the expatriates, and give them daily briefing concerning the home organization either through phone calls, visitation or e-mails. Both the organization and the mentor should engage in a two way communication on a regular basis with the expatriate so that he/she may feel comfortable, and not worried much about the final return. Communication from the organization and the expatriate mentor is critical in providing support to the expatriates and their family upon returning to their home country. Through regular communication with the home country the expatriates' hope and expectation about his/her future career may increase, and his/her uncertainty about the home coming may decrease. This statement could be supported by theorists such as (Allen & Alvarez, 1998; Harris and Moran, 1996; Dowling et al. 1999; Black et al., 1992a) who stressed that frequent communication reduces feelings of isolation, improves the motivation and morale of the expatriate, diminishes the expatriates' 'anomie' and feeling of loneliness, and provides him/her with up-to-date information about the positive and negative changes that have taken place at the home country's working place.

While there is a need for organization to implement a solid repatriation blueprint that addresses issues concerning their repatriation process, it is also essential that the repatriates themselves try not to rely heavily on the HR managers or the organization that sent them abroad. While the expatriate is accepting good support from the organization during the overseas assignment, they should also remember that part of the repatriation responsibility is theirs, and that they should put more trust in themselves rather than the organization or the organization's HR managers. By being proactive as demonstrated by one of the interviewees in this study who took extra IT lessons during his service abroad, the repatriate would not only be able to manage his/her adjustment much better after the return, but will also find some form of satisfaction that may help ease the repatriation adjustment much better than expected.

Theories and empirical findings in this study indicate that repatriation is complex, and that it is a daunting task for repatriates especially for those who have served abroad for a lengthy period of time. Because of the complexity involved with repatriation, it is

essential that organization come up with many appropriate solutions that could be used to manage repatriation in a much better way. The author of this thesis is well aware that repatriation is many times, much more difficult than that of the relocation, but despite this notion, he still believes that if the right repatriation approach is taken to address the above mention, the possibility of a successful repatriation will begin to manifest itself in SLMFA's repatriation process.

## **5.2 Implications for Management**

While there are some form of improvement in SLMFA's expatriation planning, the study found its repatriation process need much attention and improvement especially in the way the organization communicate and make overall plans for its returning staffs after their overseas assignment. While much attention has been devoted to the organization expatriation and relocation adjustment, the study found only little has been done to equally address the organization's repatriation process. The lack of understanding shown by the organization towards repatriation could be an assumption that its repatriation adjustment is less significant than that of its staff relocation and expatriation adjustment abroad. The case organization in this study need to establish credible repatriation policy, establish debriefing for the returning staff, identify repatriates' new skills and make assessment of the gaps in their skills, encourage the expatriates to visit the home country and then the home organization while staying abroad. Also, the returnees should be recognized and rewarded for the service that they have rendered to the organization during their stay abroad. Such a move will not only demonstrate that the organization is committed to addressing its abysmal way of handling its repatriation process, but that it is also ready to transform its repatriation process in a much professional way that may eventually lead to success in the way repatriation is manage in the organization. Organizations should be well aware that when repatriation is poorly managed it may have negative impact on the organization as a whole (Harvey, 1982). Organizations should start listening to their repatriated staffs in order to know how repatriation is affecting them individually and the organizations that sent them abroad. The repatriates themselves also need to understand that their fate and destiny during repatriation is in their own very hand, and that they should be very effective in handling their repatriation adjustment.

From comments made during the interviews, it was clear that the management of expatriation and repatriation are taking care of by handful of HR managers who are also responsible for the organization's domestic labour force in Sierra Leone. Such decision could be one of the many reasons why the case organization is not managing its repatriation process effectively. It is suggested that the organization establish a separate department in the organization that should be responsible for all issues related to the organization expatriation and repatriation issues only, and not to be left into the hands of those same HR managers who are already occupy with too many tasks that are related to the organization's domestic operations in Sierra Leone.

The purpose of this thesis is to gain insight and understanding about repatriation. The findings and conclusions from the three research questions (see chapter one) has provided some understanding about repatriation and its burden. Overall, there were clear indications that the case organization seemed to allocate more time and resources to its expatriation and not its repatriation process which continue to cause excess stress and confusion among the returnees. In order to have a meaningful and successful repatriation, SLMFA HR managers need to envision repatriation as a process, and not only as the last step in the expatriation cycle.

### **5.3 Suggestions for future research**

The research for this current thesis highlights a number of areas for future research on repatriation at the organizational level. Much attention needs to be directed towards the adjustment patterns that surround the socio cultural and organizational readjustment of the returning staffs and their spouse and children who accompany them while they were serving abroad. Future research should not only focus on investigating expatriation in organizations, but should also begin to seriously examining the reentry dynamics of the returning staffs and their immediate family members who has also return with them after the international service abroad.

Because of the peculiar findings in the ways culture impact some of the returning repatriates in this study, the author of this thesis suggest that much is needed to further the theoretical aspect in this field of study which will examine the impact of reentry acculturation on repatriates who have return back to Sierra Leone after an international

assignment in the West. Another area that needs further research in this field of study is repatriates' coping strategy in a developing country. Many of the repatriates coping strategies in this current study seemed peculiar when compared to the coping strategies that are mentioned in most of the American literatures and journals that has dominated the field of study in expatriation and repatriation. It seemed there are differences in coping pattern when compared to expatriates that are returning home to settle down in the developing countries, and expatriates that are returning home to settle down in the developed countries. Results and analysis from such research may contribute immensely to the knowledge of reentry acculturation and pattern of coping strategies in repatriation which may benefit overseas staffs that are returning to their home country after serving abroad. Finally, this research has found repatriation to be an excruciating life experience that affects not only the lives of the returning repatriates, but also that of the spouses and children who has return home with the repatriates after the overseas assignment.



## TABLE OF REFERENCES

- Adler, P.S. (1975). The transitional experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 15(4), 13-23.
- Adler, N., (1981). Re-Entry: *Managing Cross-Cultural Transitions*, Group & Organization Studies, issue 6, no. 3, pp. 341-356.
- Alder, N., (1991). International dimensions of organizational behaviour, *PWS-Kent Publishing Company, Boston, Massachusetts*.
- Allen, D., & Alvarez, S. (1998). Empowering expatriates and organizations to improve repatriation effectiveness. *HR. Human Resource Planning*. 21(4), 29-41.
- Andreason, A.W., Kinneer, K.D., (2004). Bringing them home again. *Industrial Management*, vol. 46, p. 13-20.
- Baruch, Y., Steele, D.J., Quantrill, G.A., (2002). "Management of expatriation and repatriation for novice global player" *International Journal of Manpower*. Vol. 23, No. 7, pp. 659-672.
- Bell, N., & Staw, B. (1989). People as sculptors versus sculpture: The role of personality and personal control in organizations. In M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall, & B.S. Lawrence (eds.), *Handbook of career theory* (232-251). Cambridge, UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Black, J. S. (1991). When yankees come home: Returning expatriates feel foreign in their native land. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 671-695.
- Black, J. S. (1992). Coming home: The relationship of expatriate expectations with repatriation adjustment and job performance. *Human Relations*, 177- 193.
- Black, J. S. (1994). Okaerisnasai: Factors related to Japanese repatriation adjustment, *Human Relations*, 1489- 1504.

Black, J.S., & Gregersen, H.B., (1999). "The Right Way to Manage Expats". *Harvard Business Review*. Vol. 77, No. 2, pp. 52-60.

Black, J.S., & Gregersen, H.B. (1998). So you're going overseas: A handbook for personal and professional success. San Diego, CA: *Global Business Publishers*.

Black, J.S. & Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, G. (1991). Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives. *Academy of Management Review* 16:2, 291-317.

Black, J.S. & Mendenhall, M. (1990). Cross-cultural training effectiveness: A review and a theoretical framework for future research. *Academy of Management Review*. 15(1), 113-126.

Bonache, J., Brewster, C., & Suutari, V. (2001). Expatriation: A developing research agenda. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(1), 3-20.

Briody, E. K., & Baba, M. L. (1991). Explaining differences in repatriation experiences: The discovery of coupled and decoupled systems. *American Anthropologist*, 322-344.

Coyle, W., Shortland, S.M., (1992). International relocation: a global perspective, Oxford, Butterworth-Heinemann.

Denzin, N.K., Lincoln Y.S., 2000. Handbook of Qualitative Research Second Edition, Sage Publications, Inc. *International Educational and Professional Publisher*, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi.

Denscombe, M. (1998). *The Good Research Guide*. Biddles Ltd, Guildford and King's Lynn, Great Britain.

Doherty, N., Brewster, C., Suutari, V. and M. Dickman. (2007). Repatriation: The End or the Middle? In Brewster, C., Sparrow, P. and G. Vernon (eds), *International HRM*. *CIPD Publishing*.

- Dukes, S. (1984). Phenomenological methodology in the human sciences. *Journal of Religion and Health*. 23(3), 197-203.
- Engen, J.R. (1995). Coming home. *Training*. 32(3), 37-40.
- Feldman, D. C., Tompson, H. B., & Holly, B. (1993). Expatriation, repatriation, and domestic geographical relocation. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 507-520.
- Feldman, D. C. (1991) Repatriate moves as career transitions, *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p.169-178.
- Forster, N. (1994). The forgotten employees? Experiences of expatriate staff returning to the UK. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 5(2): 405-425.
- Gates, S. (1996). *Managing Expatriates Return*. A research report. Report Number 1148-96-RR. The Conference Board, USA.
- Gomez-Mejia, L., & Balkin, D. B. (1987). The determinants of managerial satisfaction with the expatriation and repatriation process. *Journal of Management Development*, 7- 17.
- Gregersen, H. B. (1991). *Dual commitments during repatriation. Case of American expatriates*, *Academy of Management Proceedings*, p.100.
- Gregersen, H. B. (1992). Commitments to a parent company and a local work unit during repatriation, *Personnel Psychology*, 29-54.
- Gregersen, H. B., & Stroh, L. K. (1997). Coming home to the Arctic cold: Antecedents to Finnish expatriate and spouse repatriation adjustment, *Personnel Psychology*, 635-654.
- Gresersen, H. B., & Black, J. S. (1996). Multiple commitments upon repatriation: The Japanese experience. *Journal of Management*, 209-229.
- Gullahorn, J.R., Gullahorn, J.E., (1963). An extension of the u-curve hypotheses, *Journal of Social Issues*, 3, pp.33-47.

Hammer, M. R., Hart, W., & Rogan, R. (1998). Can you go home again? An analysis of the repatriation of corporate managers and spouses. *Management International Review*, 67-86.

Harvey, M. G. (1989). Repatriation of corporate executives: an empirical study, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 20, Issue 1, p.131-144

Harris, P.R., Moran, R.T., (1996). *Managing cultural differences, leadership strategies for a new world of business*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Gulf Publishing Company, Houston, Texas.

Harzing, Anne-Wil & Ruysseveldt, Yoris Van (1995). *International Resource Management*, SAGE Publications Ltd, Thousands Oaks, California.

Holme, I.M., & Solvang B.K. (1997). *Forskningsmetodik – om kvalitativa och kvantitativa metoder*, Studentlitteratur, Lund.

Hurn, Brian J. (1999). *Repatriation – the toughest assignment of all*. Industrial and commercial Training, Vol. 31, No. 6, p.224-228.

Kittredge, C. (1988, April 3). Growing up global. *The Boston Globe Magazine*, pp. 37-41.

Klaff, L. G. (2002). The right way to bring expats home. *Workforce* 8(7), 40-44.

Kvale, S., (1996). Interviews, An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing. Sage Publications, *International Educational and Professional Publisher*, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi.

Lazarova, M., & Caligiuri, P. (2001). Retaining Repatriates: The Role of Organizational Support Practices. *Journal of World Business*, 389-401.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Linehan, M., & Scullion, H. (2002). Repatriation of European female corporate executives: an empirical study. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 254-267.

Lundahl, U., & Skärvad, P-H. (1999). *Utredningsmetodik för samhällsvetare och ekonomer*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Malinowski, C., Paik, Y., & Segaud, B. (2002). How to improve repatriation management: Are motivations and expectations congruent between the company and expatriates?, *International Journal of Management*, Vol. 23 NO. 7, pp. 635-648.

Martin, J.N. (1984). The intercultural reentry: Conceptualization and direction for future research. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 8, 115-134.

Marshall, C., Rossman, G.B., (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, Inc. Newbury Park, London, New Delhi.

McDaniels, C., & Gates, R. (2005). *Marketing Research*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

McDonald, G.M. (1993). ET go home? The successful management of expatriate transfers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 8(2), 18-20.

MacDonald, S. (2002). *Coming Home: Life after Working Internationally*.

Mendenhall, M. and Oddou, G. (1985). The dimensions of expatriate acculturation: a review. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(1): 39-47.

Miles, M. B & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Nicholson, N., (1984). "A Theory of Work Role Transitions". *Administrative Science Quarterly*. Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 172-191.

Oberg, K. 1960. Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environment. *Practical Anthropologist*, 7: 177-82.

Paik, Y., Segaud, B., & Malinowski, C. (2002). How to improve repatriation management: Are motivations and expectations congruent between the company and expatriates?. *International Journal of Manpower*, 635-648.

Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* 3:ed, London: SAGE cop 2002.

Peltonen, T., (1997). Facing the rankings from the past: a tournament perspective on repatriate career mobility, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 106 - 123.

Piet-Pelon, N.J., Hornby, B. (1992). Reentry. In *Woman's guide to overseas living* (2nd ed) (p.173-192). Yarmouth, ME: International Press, Inc.

Riusala, K. and Suutari, V. (2000). Expatriation and careers: perspectives of expatriate and spouses. *Career Development International*, 5(2): 81-90.

Sahin, N.H. (1990). Re-entry and the academic and psychological problems of the second generation. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 2(2), 165-182.

Sappinen, J. (1993). "Expatriate adjustment on foreign assignment", *European Business Review*, Vol. 93 No.5, pp. 3-11.

Saunders, M. and Thornhill, A. (2003) '*Research Methods for Business Students*', 3<sup>th</sup> Edition, Financial Times, Prentice Hall: Harlow, ISBN 0-27365804-2.

Seidman, I., (1998). *Interviewing as Qualitative Research, A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, Second Edition. Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

Selmer, J. (1999). Career issues and international assignment of business expatriates *Career Development International*, 81-90.

Shilling, M. (1993). How To Win at Repatriation. *Personnel Journal*, September. 40-46

Solomon, C.M., (1995). "Repatriation planning checklist". *Personnel Journal*. Vol. 74, No. 1, pp. 32-35.

Scullion, H., & Brewster, C. (2001). The management of expatriates: message from Europe?, *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 36, Issue 4, p.346-365.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1996). Basic of Qualitative Research, Second Edition, Techniques and procedures for developing Grounded Theory. Sage Publications, *International Educational and professional Publisher Thousand Oaks London New Delhi*.

Stone, A. A., Helder, L., and Schneider, M. S., (1988): Coping with stressful events: coping dimensions and issues. In: Cohen (eds.): Life events and psychological functioning: theoretical and methodological issues. Beverly Hills, Sage.

Stroh, L. K., Gregersen, H. B., & Black, J. S. (1998). Closing the gap: Expectations versus reality among repatriates. *Journal of World Business*, 33(2), 111-124.

Suutari, V., and Välimaa, K. (2002). Antecedent of Repatriation Adjustment: New Evidence From Finnish Repatriates. *International Journal of Manpower*, 23:7, 617-634.

Suutari, V., Brewster, C., (2003). "Repatriation: Empirical evidence from a longitudinal study of careers and expectations among Finnish expatriates", *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.

Torbiörn, I. (1982). Living Abroad: Personal Adjustment and Personnel Policy in the Overseas Setting, New York, Wiley.

Tom, J.P. (1992). Abroad at Home. *Across the Board*. September. 36-37.

Tung, R.L., (1998). American expatriates abroad: From neophytes to cosmopolitans. *Journal of World Business*, 33(2), 125-144.

Vygotsky, L. (1987). *Thought and language* (A. Kozulin, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Weick, K. E. (2001). *Making Sense of the Organization*. Oxford, UK, Blackwell Publishers.

Widersheim-paul, F. & Eriksson, L. (1997). *Att utreda, forska och rapportera*, Bäcklunds Boktryckeri AB, Malmö.

Wilkinson, D., Birmingham, P., (2003). *Using Research Instruments, A guide for researchers*, RoutledgeFalmer, London.

Windharn International. (1998). *1998 Global Relocation Trends Survey Report*. Windharn International, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003.

Yan, Aimin; Zhu, Guorong & Hall, Douglas T. (2002) International assignments for career building: a model of agency relationships and psychological contracts, *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3, p.373-391.

Yin, R.K., (1989). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*, revised edition, Sage Publications, Inc., Newbury Park, London, New Delhi.

Yin, R.K. (2003a). *Applications of case study research* 2 ed., London: SAGE, cop. 2003.

Yurkiewicz, J. & Rosen, B. (1995). "Increasing Receptivity to Expatriate Assignments". In Selmer, J. (Ed.), *Expatriate Management: New Ideas for International Business* (pp. 37-56). Westport: Quorum Books.

Zapf, M. K. (1991). Cross-cultural transition and wellness: Dealing with culture chock. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 14, 105-119.



## **APENDIX 1:**

### **COVER LETTER AS E-MAIL ATTACHMENT TO THE REPATRIATES**

----- Original Message -----

**From:** sheku kamara

**To:**

**Sent:** Sunday, October 27, 2007 12:05 AM

**Subject:** REPATRIATE RESEARCH

Dear Repatriate

My name is Sheku Kamara. I am a graduate student at the University of Vaasa in Finland, conducting a research project under the supervision of Professor Vesa Suutari as part of the requirements towards a M.Sc. degree. As repatriates at the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) in Sierra Leone I am inviting you to participate in a research study that examines issues that are related to the repatriation process at SLMFA in Sierra Leone.

The purpose of the study is to examine and learn about the: adjustment experience of repatriates returning to SLMFA in Sierra Leone after working overseas, ways in which repatriates prepare themselves for the repatriation, and the strategies repatriates used to cope in Sierra Leone. Now it is your time to tell your own story about the way repatriation have impact your life from the perspective of your daily working life at SLMFA and the community or environment that you now finds yourself in again in Sierra Leone after working abroad at Sierra Leone's Embassies and Consulates in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the US. I will appreciate it very much if you choose to participate in this study, and if you chose not to - I will as well appreciate and respect your opinion.

Remember there is no single data or traces of any written document that chronicled the plight and burden of repatriation in Sierra Leone. By participating or answering the attach research questions - you will all together highlight the difficulties and problems that surround repatriation adjustment at SLMFA and in Sierra Leone in general. By responding and answering the attach questions for this research you will make known to the human resource managers at SLMFA the burden and agony of repatriation, and by responding to the questionnaire you will able to exposed the gap in SLMFA's repatriation process which could bring about positive changes in the ways SLMFA handle and manage its repatriation process. Also, through your participation in this research you will help educate and prepared SLMFA and other organizations to be responsive and be proactive to issues that are related to the entire repatriation process in Sierra Leone.

Attach is a list of questions that needs to be read carefully and then answered during my 45 -50 minutes telephone interview with you. Data compiled from the interview and your responses will be kept strictly confidential at all time, and non of your personal identification will be exposed or given out. If you would like to participate please see my contact information below, and contact me as soon as possible through my e-mail address which could be the easiest and fastest way to reach me. If you have any

questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact me – I will be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you for allocating your precious time in order to participate in this study, and please forward this request to other repatriates who may wish to participate in this study, and who may have been in Sierra Leone within a period of one and a half year only upon repatriation. SLMFA repatriates who have repatriated to Sierra Leone over one and a half year ago should not partake in this research. Once again I thank you for your kind assistance.

Sincerely

Sheku Kamara

Sheku Kamara  
Jätkimaininki 3 B 31  
02320 Espoo  
Tel: +358 9 5121770 (home)  
GSM: +358 41 7744773  
E-mail: sheku.kamara@pp.inet.fi

## **APENDIX 2:**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

The interview questions are put together in order to facilitate the data collection for this current study. This interviewed questions below serves as the researcher's guide, and was not intended to be strictly followed. Rather, it was intended to be used as a checklist to ensure that no important aspects or issues related to repatriation from the perspective of the Sierra Leone Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SLMFA) is left out during the interviews which was carried out by the researcher/author of this current thesis.

#### **Questions related to repatriates individual background**

What is your age?

Are you single or married?

How many children do you have before and during the assignment abroad?

How old are the children? Where the children in nursery or primary school during or after the assignment?

**Questions related to the repatriates service at SLMFA**

Where did you first heard about the SLMFA?

How many years have you worked for the SLMFA?

What was your position during the assignment?

What is your position now at SLMFA after the assignment?

How many foreign posting have you take up abroad since you start working for the SLMFA?, and how long did the foreign assignment last?

Which country where you for the assignment?, and when did you returned to Sierra Leone?

**Questions related to the preliminary adjustment**

How often did you make contact to SLMFA in Sierra Leone during your overseas assignment?

Did you contact SLMFA at home in order to be updated during the assignment or something else?

Did you have any contact person in Sierra Leone or sponsor at SLMFA office in Sierra Leone who had informed you about changes at your work place during the assignment, and to what extent?

Did SLMFA provide you any sponsor during the assignment, and if so what role did he or she plays in your repatriation adjustment?

Did SLMFA pay your trips back to Sierra Leone?

How did SLMFA prepare you for your return trip back to Sierra Leone?

Did you receive any pre-return training from the SLMFA?

How did you personally or together with your family prepared for the return to Sierra Leone?

What was your overall thinking and expectations prior to returning back to SLMFA in Sierra Leone?

### **Questions related to post-return adjustment**

How do you cope with stress as you try to adjust to the environment and real life situation in Sierra Leone?

How is your free-time spent in Sierra Leone now that you are there?

Has the foreign assignment changed your perception about SLMFA and Sierra Leone in general?

Did you try to do something that reduce or lower your stress after the return?

Has the relationship with your close family members and friends changed due to your long absence from Sierra Leone?

Have you tried to keep in touch with friends you met during the foreign assignment abroad?

How has the foreign country's culture impact you individually? How has the foreign country's culture (if any) impact your life now that you have return to Sierra Leone?

How did you compared the foreign culture to that of the Sierra Leone's culture?

How can you describe your home coming adjustment, and was it easy or difficult?

How long did it take you, or you and your family to adjust in Sierra Leone?

How has your expatriate knowledge influenced your perception about SLMFA and co-workers that are working there?

How has your co-workers, friends and close family members react to the changes (if any) in you due to your long stay abroad? Has the changes (if any) in your life influences the way you communicate or interact with people in your social cycle in Sierra Leone?

How specific and clear was your work role position during your return to SLMFA?

How would you describe your work role position today, and how would you compare your repatriate work role now at SLMFA to that of your expatriate work role abroad?

How would you describe your position today at the SLMFA as compared to that of the foreign assignment?

How about your current position after your return to SLMFA – was it the same position as before or something new? How much did you like the job at the SLMFA?

Has SLMFA somehow considered your assignment worthy after the returned?

Have you been able to apply your expatriate knowledge and skills upon returning to SLMFA?

What new things did you learned (if any) when you were working as expatriate?

Did staff at the SLMFA value and admire your new skills and knowledge?

How did you receive information that you are returning back home, and from whom specifically did you receive the information?

Did you ever visit Sierra Leone before your final return to the SLMFA in Sierra Leone?

How has your expectation been met as a repatriate living now in Sierra Leone?

What was the most difficult thing(s) you encounter when you start working again at SLMFA in Sierra Leone?

Was there any support from your co-workers or senior authorities at the SLMFA?

How do you see your future at the SLMFA, and do you see any prospect for advancement or promotion?

How much has your wage change now as compared to the wage you earn during your expatriate assignment?

How has your standard of living change in Sierra Leone as compared to that during the international assignment?

How has the home coming affect your social status at the SLMFA?

How did SLMFA assist you with housing, finance, school for your children (if any) and other relevant matters in relation to the home coming?

Did your spouse or partner work during the assignment abroad, and was he or she able to find work after the assignment in Sierra Leone?

How has the other family members (e.g. children) adjust in Sierra Leone, and has there been any problem or difficulties in the way they adapt or adjust at home?

How long did it take you to adjust in Sierra Leone, and how well did you readjusted at the SLMFA?

How have you adjusted generally to the overall repatriation life in Sierra Leone?

How would you react if SLMFA offers you another foreign assignment abroad?

How can SLMFA human resource management functions be developed and become more effective to issues concerning repatriation?

How did you (individually or together with your family) prepare for the repatriation?,

How would you describe or asses the overall HRM functions at the SLMFA?

### **Questions for coping strategy**

Which strategies has been most helpful in your coping method as repatriate in Sierra Leone?

Which strategies have been least helpful in your coping method as repatriate in Sierra Leone?

How did you feel emotionally to return back to the SLMFA and to Sierra Leone the place you called 'home'?

*If there are any other important SLMFA repatriation issues that has not been included in the list of questions above, please tell me what the issues are so that I will include them to the questions before my interviews start.*